

# Thurleigh Lower School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109486
<b>Local Authority</b>	BEDFORDSHIRE LA
<b>Inspection number</b>	310002
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 October 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	David Speakman

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	59
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Peter Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Ingrid Bell
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	11 January 2005
<b>School address</b>	High Street Thurleigh Bedford MK44 2DB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 771252
<b>Fax number</b>	01234 771252

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a small village school, which takes children from Thurleigh and the surrounding villages. Almost half of the pupils come from outside the local area because of the school's good reputation. The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Of the few from minority ethnic groups, all speak English as their first language. A smaller than usual number have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The proportion claiming a free school meal is below average. Attainment on entry to the Foundation Stage is typical for children of this age. The school gained Healthy School Status in 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Inspection outcomes agree with the school's own evaluation that it is an effective school. It provides good value for money. The care, guidance and support of pupils and their personal development are outstanding. Pupils' progress is good at all stages of the school. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average. School assessment data shows that achievement in reading and writing were good in 2007 but less so in mathematics. There has been a recent improvement in attainment at the end of Year 4. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen from broadly average in 2005 to very high in 2006 and 2007, when compared to the attainment nationally expected. This is because the school improved its monitoring of each pupil's progress. The system is now highly effective. Pupils' current attainment in Year 4 is above that expected for their age.

The quality of education is good, including that in the Foundation Stage. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and ensure all achieve well. A good curriculum more than meets statutory requirements, with the inclusion of French for pupils in Years 3 and 4 and a strong emphasis on pupils' personal and social development. The level of care and support for pupils is extremely high. Consequently, pupils feel safe and highly valued in school. They make a significant contribution to school life by looking after each other, carrying out jobs very reliably, and making sensible suggestions about how to improve life in school further. They enjoy school very much and their attendance is good. Pupils know all about healthy eating and put this into practice in school. They enthusiastically join in the many opportunities for them to be physically fit. Behaviour is good. The school prepares pupils extremely well for the next stage of their education. There are excellent partnerships with the community and particularly with other schools within the local pyramid.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Working closely with the governors and other staff, the headteacher has established an extremely clear vision for school improvement. Targets are challenging and have supported improved attainment, particularly in writing. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Strengths have been maintained and standards have risen. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive and the school has a good capacity to improve even further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage provides a good start to pupils' education. There are excellent induction arrangements and pupils soon settle into the Nursery. From this point, their personal, social and emotional development is rapid and progress is good in other areas of learning. The Foundation Stage is managed and organised well. The teacher and teaching assistants work effectively together to provide interesting learning opportunities that give a good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. Adults carefully monitor pupils' progress and experiences and know each individual's level of attainment at any time. This enables them to help pupils to make good progress.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils achieve as well in mathematics as they do in reading and writing by providing greater challenge with their work.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. Children in the Foundation Stage progress well and reach standards that are above those expected nationally on entry to Year 1. Standards at the end of Year 2 are above average. In 2007, accurate assessment showed standards in reading were well above average, above average in writing and broadly average in mathematics. There has been a trend of general improvement for the last three years. Reading is a strength and is consistently well above average. Standards in writing improved this year and were above average. Attainment in mathematics has been above average since 2004, but fell back in 2007 because pupils were not challenged as effectively as in reading and writing. For the last two years standards at the end of Year 4 have been very high in reading, writing and mathematics when compared to the nationally expected standards at this age. Pupils make good progress overall, and they are exceptionally successful in improving their writing. Pupils use their reading and writing skills well across the curriculum, and their writing contributes especially well to good standards in other subjects.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They behave well and have sensible and mature attitudes towards school. Pupils feel very safe and know that adults care for them. Many would try to solve any difficulties for themselves, but know there is always someone to turn to if they need help. Pupils and staff are confident that children look after each other. There is no need for 'playground buddies'. All pupils take on this responsibility and readily befriend those who appear lonely. New pupils feel very welcome very quickly. These social aspects of the school, together with interesting learning opportunities, support the great enjoyment pupils say they find in school. They show an extraordinary knowledge and understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They know a great deal about healthy eating and take part enthusiastically in the wide range of opportunities to maintain their physical fitness. Pupils contribute significantly to the high quality school life. They take on responsibility extremely well, doing their jobs reliably. The school council contributes to school life very well. Pupils are extremely well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Consistently good teaching enables pupils to achieve well. Teachers use assessment information to make pupils' work challenging but achievable. Planned outcomes for each lesson are well adapted to the different ages and abilities of pupils in the class. Tasks for older pupils and the more able are more challenging. Pupils at all levels feel they are achieving well and enjoy learning. Closing of lessons summarises learning, but there are sometimes missed opportunities to help pupils reach the next level. Teaching assistants make a good contribution. They work well with teachers, know what they are to do, and have good relationships with the pupils in their care. Teachers are skilled at using information and communication technology to make

teaching points very clear so that pupils understand quickly and lessons move at a brisk pace. However, the pace of lessons very occasionally slows and pupils lose concentration.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. The curriculum is planned carefully so that pupils' skills and knowledge are progressively developed as they move through the mixed-age classes. There is specialist teaching, including French, physical education and music. The middle and upper school to which most pupils transfer provide some of this. The curriculum strongly supports pupils' personal, social and health education and physical fitness through physical education lessons, extra-curricular provision and the daily 'wake-up-shake-up sessions'. There are some helpful links between literacy and other subjects, which support the improvement in writing. There is scope to develop these links further. Pupils really enjoy the 'special curriculum days' when pupils of all ages work together on different topics. Curriculum enrichment is good, with a good range of visits and visitors and extra-curricular clubs.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The personal and academic guidance pupils receive is excellent. Parents express a high degree of appreciation and confidence in the care shown to their children. Child protection and health and safety procedures are fully in place. All adults having contact with children have the appropriate checks made on them. There are excellent arrangements for pupils' induction into the Nursery and to support their transfer to middle school. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. The school monitors the academic progress of individual pupils very carefully. Assessments take place regularly and teachers have a very clear understanding of how well each pupil is achieving and if they are doing well enough. Assessment information is used very well to set challenging but achievable targets in literacy and numeracy for each pupil. Pupils confirm that teachers review targets regularly and change them when they have demonstrated competence. Pupils know how well they are progressing towards their targets because marking is clear and teachers talk to them about their work and progress.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management is good with some excellent features. The headteacher works extremely well with staff and governors to establish a clear way forward. The long-term strategic plan and the short-term school-development plan together provide an excellent framework for school improvement. School self-evaluation is effective and identifies key areas for improvement, making sure pupils at all levels are equally supported and progress as well as each other. As well as reliable assessment data, parents', pupils', governors' and staff views are all considered carefully when deciding on priorities and setting challenging targets for improvement. The headteacher and governors use links with other schools and the community extremely well to improve and enrich the quality of education provided. Staff and governors carefully monitor the school's performance. Under the excellent leadership of the chair, governors work within a well-organised and efficient framework. They have a clear understanding of how well the school is doing and are effective in holding it to account for its performance. Both new and

more-established governors have regular training to provide them with the skills needed to discharge their responsibilities well.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

19 October 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thurleigh Lower School, Thurleigh, MK44 2DB

I really enjoyed the time I spent in your school and I was very impressed by what I saw. I enjoyed visiting your lessons and meeting you and your teachers. I especially appreciated the chance I had to talk to you about your school. I was impressed by how mature and sensible most of you are.

You have a good school. All the adults in school work very hard to provide you with a good quality of education. Most of you play your part by behaving well, taking these opportunities seriously and trying very hard to do your best. There are a few pupils who do not always behave as well as others and this sometimes takes teachers' attention away from the important task of helping you to learn. These pupils can help by being more settled in lessons. Otherwise, I was impressed that you are so sensible in the way you learn, make friends and care for others. Those of you I spoke to enjoy school very much and it is clear that you all get on well together. Your parents are delighted with the school and how well it is helping you. The result is that you all make good progress in lessons and in becoming responsible learners, ready to go on to the next school. You have made exceptional progress in improving your writing recently, and your reading is excellent.

There is very little that needs improving that your teachers have not already recognised and done something about. This is one of the main reasons why your school is so good. The progress you make in mathematics, although good, is not as impressive as that in literacy. Therefore, I am asking the staff and governors to make sure that you make as good progress in mathematics as you do in reading and writing.

I wish you all the best in the future.

David Speakman

Lead inspector