

# Thwaites School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112166
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	310803
<b>Inspection date</b>	6 March 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Sheila Mawer

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>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	54
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Malcom Howitt
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Jane Patton
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 May 2004
<b>School address</b>	Thwaites School Hallthwaites Millom Cumbria LA18 5HP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01229 772554
<b>Fax number</b>	01229 772554

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the standards and progress of all pupils in Key Stage 1
- how well pupils are being prepared for life in multi-cultural Britain
- how well teachers use assessment information to plan and deliver their teaching
- the strengths in pupils' personal development and the quality of care, guidance and support
- the effectiveness of the governors in holding the school to account.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and records of pupils' progress over time. Discussions were held with staff, governors and pupils, and questionnaires returned by parents were considered. A range of documentation was also examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

## Description of the school

This is a very small school and pupils are taught in three mixed age classes. It attracts pupils from a wide rural area and has recently been oversubscribed. Socio-economic circumstances are broadly average. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The school shares the placement of a small number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities with a local special school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Thwaites is a good school and pupils' personal development and the care and support they receive are outstanding. The school is well regarded within the community and has developed good partnerships with other schools. Many parents travel several miles so their children can attend the school. Their very positive views of the school are well justified. A typical comment from a parent is, 'All my children race to get on the bus each morning, leaving home with bright, smiling faces. What more could a parent ask for?'

The school takes exceptional care of its pupils and this underpins all of its work. It has very good relationships with a special school, sharing the placements of a small number of pupils with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities. External agencies are used widely to support these pupils as well as other vulnerable pupils in the school. Safeguarding meets government requirements and procedures for protecting pupils are in place. Pupils feel safe and very well cared for and relationships are excellent. Parents are overwhelmingly happy with the support their children receive. Pupils receive good guidance about how well they are doing in their work. The quality of marking is good and through self-assessment and the review of their targets pupils are alert to what they need to improve next. This helps to accelerate their progress.

Pupils thrive because they are all valued and encouraged to succeed. In this very supportive atmosphere their personal development as well as their spiritual, moral and social awareness is excellent. They love coming to school and this is reflected in above average attendance, impeccable behaviour and a keenness to learn and do well. Pupils flourish as healthy, fit and mature learners, where incidents of bullying are rare. When they are consulted over school improvements or given extra responsibilities they show great initiative. The school council, for example, chose the healthy menus for meals brought in from a local restaurant. Year 6 demonstrate good enterprise skills when they plan and cost a bi-annual trip to London.

Pupils show great care and concern for others. This extends to the loving care they give to small pets they look after in the school. They have a keen sense of responsibility towards the local community and often get involved in environmental issues such as recycling. The school has worked hard to give pupils a good understanding of the wider world and cultural development is good. Pupils were recently given a good insight into racial harmony within a rural community from a touring Asian theatre group. With high standards in most subjects and a strong sense of community, pupils are well prepared for their future lives.

Achievement is good and has improved over the last three years. Progress is very good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 1. At the end of Year 6, standards are well above average. Test results in 2007 were significantly above average in English, mathematics and science. There is a legacy of underachievement in Years 1 and 2 but rates of pupils' progress are improving with better teaching. Standards by the end of Year 2 are broadly average overall, but writing is below average. Since 2007, standards have risen by the end of Year 2. In the previous two years they were significantly below average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported in class and make good progress in reaching their targets.

There are many strong features to the good teaching and effective curriculum. The school recognises the difficulties in providing curriculum enrichment and staff training in a small school. In order to address these issues a good partnership has been established with other

local schools. Regular sports coaching for pupils, training days for staff, projects for gifted and talented pupils and visits and visitors are just some initiatives that are promoting pupils' well-being and improving the teaching and learning. In lessons, some subjects are taught together as topics to make the learning more interesting. At the moment, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills in other subjects in order to raise standards further, particularly in the infant class.

Pupils learn successfully because of good teaching. Activities are well suited to pupils' ages and abilities because assessment information is used effectively to plan work that provides challenge for pupils. In Years 1 and 2, progress has been slower in the past but it is getting better with stronger teaching and improved resources. Pupils are attentive in lessons because the learning is fun. They know what is expected of them because teachers explain clearly and make sure everyone understands. This was demonstrated well in a numeracy lesson, when pupils at the end of the teacher's explanation knew clearly which operation to use when solving word problems. Pupils have good opportunities in lessons to show initiative and work on their own. Any underachievement is quickly identified from accurate assessments and teaching assistants are well deployed to support pupils in 'catch up' programmes.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and works closely with the staff to foster a 'shared responsibility' in moving the school forward. All staff are involved in devising the school improvement plan. They clearly know the strengths and weaknesses in provision through their monitoring and accurate self-evaluation. Challenging targets were exceeded in 2007. Governance is good. There has been a marked improvement and governors visit the school regularly now to review its work and are making good progress in shaping its direction and holding it to account. A group of governors are currently working with the school council to establish a school web site. Good improvements have been made since the previous inspection and many strengths maintained. The improving picture and clear direction for the future show that there is a good capacity for further improvement in the future. The school gives good value for money.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start in their education and provision is good. Although they share the classroom with the infant children, a teaching assistant works exclusively with them to promote the experiences required for children at this age, such as imaginative play. Previously, the children shared all of the teaching with the infant pupils. This new initiative is impacting positively on the good teaching and learning. Although the classroom is small, a satisfactory range of materials is available for children to make some choices in their learning. A well equipped outdoor area is timetabled for regular use and this allows children to extend their learning and particularly their physical development. Children join the Reception year with skills that are typical for their age although their language skills are often immature. They quickly settle into classroom routines and their personal development flourishes through the excellent role models of older pupils. The children make good progress and by the end of the Reception year most reach and some exceed the goals expected of five-year-olds.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise the quality of pupils' writing by the end of Year 2.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils throughout the school to develop their writing skills in different subjects.

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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?	2
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	1
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	2
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

7 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thwaites School, Cumbria, LA18 5HP

Thank you all for the lovely welcome you gave me when I visited your school. Yours is a good school with a number of particularly special strengths. Here are some of them:

- you reach high standards and make good progress by the time you leave school
- you are extremely well cared for and supported by the staff
- your behaviour is excellent and you look after each other really well
- you enjoy school so much that you are hardly ever absent
- the teaching is good and lessons are made interesting and fun
- you are all keen to take extra responsibility and especially the school council who are doing a great job
- the school is very well led and governors are often in school to see how well you are doing.

Some of the younger pupils are not doing as well in their writing as other subjects. I have asked the school to give you more help and time to improve your writing in literacy lessons. Also, I know all of you enjoy doing topics in the school but sometimes you do not use or improve your writing skills enough in other subjects. I noticed particularly in science that older pupils are not recording experiments with enough detail. Your teachers will be providing you with more opportunities to use your writing skills in other subjects. This should help your writing to improve and be as good as reading throughout the school.

Thank you again for all your help and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Mawer

Lead inspector