

Thorpedene Infants' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115265
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA LA
Inspection number	311893
Inspection date	22 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Heather Weston HMI

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4-7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Jewey
Headteacher	Mr Nick Booth
Date of previous school inspection	8 September 2003
School address	Delaware Road Shoeburyness Southend-on-sea Essex SS3 9NP
Telephone number	01702 582283
Fax number	01702 584698

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and of the Foundation Stage and investigated the following issues: the action taken by the school to promote the progress of able and more able pupils, particularly in reading and writing; how effectively pupils are guided as to how to improve their work and thus reach the highest possible standards; and how the tracking of pupils' personal development contributes to both their overall achievement and to their personal development and well-being. Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and documents, parent questionnaires, and discussions with staff, pupils, parents and governors. 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, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Thorpedene Infants' School is an average sized school. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is significantly above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average, although the number with a statement of special educational need is in line with average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including the proportion with English as an additional language is much lower than average.

The school has gained the following awards: Investors in People, Healthy Schools Award, Gold Arts Mark, Active Mark, Basic Skills Quality Mark, Clean Air Gold Award, and a School Improvement Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thorpedene Infants' school is a very good school. The words of one parent sum it up. 'This is such a caring school, the teachers and head are so approachable and I am very pleased with the academic progress of my son. The after school clubs are such fun for the children and the school achieves so much'. Staff really care for pupils, they know each and every pupil very well and are skilled at overcoming barriers to learning.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with a very wide range of ability and overall attainment is low. Children all make very good progress, and move to Year 1 with standards just below national expectations. At the end of Year 2 pupils reached average standards for a period of four years, and these rose to just above average last year. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, those from minority ethnic backgrounds or with English as an additional language all reached higher standards than similar pupils nationally. Almost all pupils make at least good progress. However, in 2007, fewer pupils gained higher levels in writing and mathematics than nationally because a small group of more able pupils, although making satisfactory progress, did not make quite as much progress as other pupils. Action was taken, and more able pupils are now making better progress. The school rightly has very high expectations in terms of standards, and sets challenging targets. Although rates of progress have been maintained, or improved in the case of more able pupils, the standards reached by Year 2 pupils this year are lower than in previous years, due to the high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A key feature of the school is the very careful ongoing assessment of pupils' progress. It is exemplary. Progress is reviewed informally on a day-by-day basis and formally every term. Any pupils at risk of underachieving are identified straight away and action is taken to ensure that they catch up. Any obstacle to progress is tackled and pupils are given carefully targeted support either by teachers, teaching assistants or by the pupil welfare team. Pupils' personal development is monitored to make sure that they maintain their confidence and are well supported. This makes a significant contribution to their academic success.

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Without exception, pupils say they enjoy school (they bounced with enthusiasm when asked about this!), feel safe, and know they have someone to talk to if they are worried. The strong focus on social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is admirable and is demonstrated by pupils' positive, welcoming attitudes, and their confidence in sharing their views. The school motto of 'caring, achieving and respecting' is truly reflected by pupils. Behaviour in lessons and around the school, including on the playground, is very good. Several parents expressed concern about behaviour, but although instances of inappropriate behaviour do occur, they are dealt with in a highly effective manner, and do not interfere with the learning of other pupils or cause them to feel insecure. Attendance is satisfactory, and the school is working hard to improve the attendance of the small group of pupils who miss too much school. Opportunities to develop healthy lifestyles are excellent, as are opportunities for pupils to contribute to both the school and the wider community. Their views are sought on a wide range of issues through the pupil council, listened to, and acted upon. In addition, they make a remarkable contribution to charities and local events. The school's emphasis on developing the basic skills means that pupils are well prepared for future adult life.

The good progress and quality of personal development is the result of good routine teaching, some of which is outstanding, underpinned by an outstanding curriculum. Key features of teaching include excellent relationships, and effective planning. Teachers place an emphasis

on independent and collaborative learning, they make reference to prior and future learning, ensure that opportunities are created for the development of skills in information communication technology, and regularly create opportunities for pupil self-assessment. Teaching assistants, who are deployed well, give quality support. Although lessons always meet pupils' needs, and they do know what they are expected to learn, in some classes opportunities are missed to fine-tune activities by identifying precisely what each group of children will achieve by the end of the lesson. Additionally, although pupils are being guided as to how to make the next steps in their learning, practice is not consistent, and the quality of marking of pupils' work is not yet highly effective. The curriculum is rich and varied. Stimulating activities are skilfully planned across the curriculum to promote pupils' interest and develop key skills in meaningful contexts. The use of practical problem solving approaches helps pupils to grasp difficult concepts and cement their understanding. As a result, pupils are highly engaged and have a positive attitude to their work. A strong focus is rightly given to the development of speaking and listening skills and to the social and emotional aspects of learning. The range of enrichment opportunities such as clubs, theme weeks, sports, visits and visitors provide the icing on the cake! The quality of care, guidance and support given to pupils is outstanding. The work of the pupil welfare team is first rate. Team members give exceptional support to parents and carers as well as to pupils. Highly effective partnerships with other agencies provide outstanding support for pupils with particular difficulties. Safeguarding procedures meet government requirements. Attention paid to child protection, risk assessments, and to the health and safety of pupils is robust.

Leadership and management are strong. The headteacher and senior leaders provide very clear direction. Responsibilities are distributed between staff and all are highly committed to ensuring that all pupils do as well as possible in every aspect of their development. Self-evaluation involves the whole school community and governors provide a good level of challenge and support. Senior leaders are aware of the need to sharpen practice relating to the monitoring and evaluation of the school development plan. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the areas identified for improvement are now among the strengths of the school. The school provides good value for money and its capacity to improve is good.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is very good, and as a result, children make very good progress in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Proper attention is paid to developing children's language and literacy skills and to enabling them to develop independent learning skills. There is an appropriate focus on the balance between child-led and adult-led learning. The careful assessment of children's learning means that the broad range of stimulating and interesting activities is well matched to their learning needs. At the time of the inspection, children were very busy making passports and taking their seats on a plane to fly off to other lands! Adults make sure that the indoor learning environment is attractive and stimulating and that activities are well resourced to support this learning. However, the school is well aware that although the outdoor environment has imaginative resources and that a range of learning opportunities are provided, it is an area for further improvement. Children's personal development and arrangements for their care, support and well-being are outstanding. In order to ensure equality of access to the outdoor area and the large indoor learning area, the school is appropriately changing from a class based to a unit-based organisation. The staff in the unit work as a strong team, due to the effective leadership of the Foundation Stage leader.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine practice in marking and feedback and the use of next step targets so that pupils know how to improve their work and share responsibility for improvement.
- Refine lesson planning by identifying precisely what each group of children will achieve by the end of each lesson.

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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 ¹ reached by learners	3
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	1

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	3
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	2

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?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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

23 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorpedene Infants' School, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS3 9NP

I thoroughly enjoyed visiting your school and meeting you all. Thank you for making me feel so very welcome and for talking to me. I know that you really enjoy being at your school and that you enjoy your work. In fact, I cannot think of another school where pupils have jumped up and down with glee when I asked that question! I think you go to a very good school. I was very impressed by the way you all work together, how keen you are to learn and the respect you all show each other. I was also very impressed by the way your opinions are listened to through the Pupil Council.

The adults at your school are a very good team. They look after you extremely well, teach you well and importantly, want you to do as well as you can in your learning in every way possible. Because of this, you all make good progress in your work. There are some things which I have asked Mr Booth and the other teachers to do to help you make even better progress. These are:

- make it even clearer to you how improve your work and make the next steps in your learning
- let you know exactly what you are expected to achieve by the end of each lesson.

I hope you all have a really enjoyable summer term.

With best wishes

Heather Weston HMI