

Thorpe Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110774
Local Authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	337568
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	459
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Colin Hammond
Headteacher	Mr Nick Guest
Date of previous school inspection	11 October 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. Inspectors watched 25 lessons and observed 17 teachers. Meetings were held with members of staff, the governing body and pupils. Amongst a range of documents, inspectors looked at the school's self-evaluation, plans for future development, various policies and the work in pupils' books, as well as 71 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how the school is sustaining the emerging pattern of improving attainment
- the ways in which the school is challenging and raising the attainment of the most able pupils
- how staff with subject leadership responsibilities contribute to driving up standards of attainment.

Information about the school

The school is much larger than the majority in the primary phase. It has a nursery at which children start part time when they are three. They continue their experience in the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception classes. The percentage of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal is below average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the percentage from homes in which English is not the first spoken language are significantly higher than usual. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, although those with a statement for their needs is above average. The school holds the Healthy Schools Award and Active Mark.

An independently run after-school club operates on the school site; it is inspected separately as it is not managed by the governing body.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

The school provides its pupils with an outstanding quality of education, a view which is supported wholeheartedly by parents and carers. One parent reflected the views of many when she said, 'My child is making excellent progress. She is fulfilling her potential and I am delighted with the support, care and understanding she receives.' The school's greatest achievement by far is the exceptional contribution it makes to community cohesion. This has resulted in a racially harmonious school, in which pupils from all backgrounds and cultures get along together superbly. Many pupils confidently approached inspectors to explain how much they enjoy being at Thorpe and how proud they are of their achievements. This is not surprising as the majority of pupils, including the high percentage who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs, often make remarkable progress. Attainment on entry is well below the expected levels. However, by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 6 standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average.

There is an emerging pattern of improving attainment that the school is well placed to sustain. The level of challenge provided for pupils, including that for the most able, is invariably well matched to their learning needs and to the stage they have reached. This is exemplified by the mature and thoughtful answers to questions given by the oldest pupils in Year 6, revealing their excellent progress in speaking and listening and, for many, their successful acquisition of English. After careful consideration, the school has introduced new schemes for teaching mathematics and for helping pupils to improve their understanding and use of language and writing. The work in pupils' books and their progress during lessons show these initiatives are already helping to drive up standards. However, the schemes have not been in place long enough for the school to reap their full benefit, given pupils' starting points.

Consistently good teaching and an outstanding curriculum, care, guidance and support underpin pupils' exceptional progress. Within this picture, the promotion of speaking and listening and the involvement of pupils in understanding the progress they are making are outstanding features. The sharing of progress with pupils is consistent in all lessons, with pupils asked to contribute their thoughts. This helps them to understand how well they are doing and to know what they need to do to improve further. Staff with subject management responsibilities make a significant contribution to pupils' progress. They provide excellent support for their colleagues, make a substantial contribution to the evaluation of their subjects and are central in the promotion of ongoing improvements.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher and senior management team make an outstanding contribution to the school's success. In partnership with the governing body they are fully committed to the continued improvement and there is no indication of

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complacency. Given the current pattern of improving attainment, the track record of exceptional progress and the excellent aspects of provision, the school's capacity for continued improvement in the future is outstanding. This capacity is also supported by accurate and rigorous self-evaluation. At the heart of the school's work is its mantra of 'challenge, inspire, succeed.' Every member of staff has an annual, personal target linked to an initiative which they devise and manage, to challenge, inspire and help pupils to be successful. Governors send home newsletters explaining these initiatives. When the pupils succeed, which they frequently do, their efforts are shared and celebrated by all.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Fully embed the new schemes for teaching English and mathematics so that their full impact on improving pupils' attainment and progress is realised.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

Pupils' excellent progress is affirmed by their performance during lessons and by the quality of the work in their books. By the end of Years 2 and 6, the majority of pupils are on course to attain broadly average standards. Behaviour, during lessons and around the school, is outstanding. Enjoyment of learning is evident in everything pupils do. They work together well, sustain their effort and independence and are ever eager to participate and to pose and answer questions. Their increasing maturity is evident in the thoughtful and reflective way they respond to questions.

Pupils say they feel safe and are well informed about how to take care of themselves. They have a good knowledge about the importance of taking regular exercise, with many participating in the wide range of activities offered by the school, for example, 'Test Match Cricket', 'World Cup Football' and cross country running. They also understand the value of eating healthily, although not all apply these principles consistently. Pupils' understanding of their community in its widest sense and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. They are ever eager to assume responsibility. They are sensitive and supportive of each other and very knowledgeable about a wide range of cultures and beliefs. Pupils' joy of learning in areas such as art and design, drama and music is given a very high profile. Regular performances are greatly appreciated by parents. The school also has an excellent choir, giving regular, highly regarded performances at events such as the Peterborough Music Festival and at the cathedral.

Workplace skills are acquired well and are supported by pupils' exceptional ability to work together, care for and support each other. Attendance is broadly average, although the school does all it can to persuade parents and carers of the importance of their children attending regularly. Even so, a minority of parents still do not do enough to ensure their children attend as frequently as they should.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have high expectations to which pupils respond extremely well. The skilful teaching of speaking and listening is resulting in outstanding progress, especially for those pupils for whom English is not the spoken home language. Even so, there are occasions when teachers miss opportunities to fully extend pupils' knowledge through the use of carefully targeted questioning. Lessons often progress at a cracking pace and are typified by interesting activities that capture pupils' enthusiasm. Such lessons are invariably based on thoughtful planning and on teachers' good subject knowledge. Pupils' progress is assessed with care and accuracy. The involvement of pupils in gaining an insight into the levels they have achieved and how they might further improve their work is exemplary. Marking provides pupils with helpful advice about how to improve their work. One pupil, whilst showing her work to an inspector, proudly said, 'I took my teacher's advice and now I've moved up a table.'

The curriculum is outstanding and matched exceptionally well to pupils' learning needs. Equal importance is attached to their academic and to their personal development. Pupils' learning is further supplemented by an excellent range of additional activities, visitors to the school and by educational visits. Pupils and the standards they achieve benefit greatly from the deployment of teachers who have specialist skills in subjects such as physical education and music. Pupils' learning in different subjects is also linked together to ensure that they get a chance to apply the skills they acquire in a range of

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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settings and can understand how learning in the various subjects overlaps. Subject leaders keep the curriculum under constant review and are always looking for ways to improve it.

Pupils are confident that should they have a problem, be it academic or social, they will receive all the help they need to resolve it. Pupils at risk of falling behind are identified promptly and arrangements are put in place to ensure they can overcome the challenges they face. Similarly, those pupils who because of their circumstances may be potentially at risk are supported exceptionally well. All staff make a superb contribution to ensuring the continued progress of those pupils who have special needs and those who do not speak English as their first language.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, staff and governors do all they can to promote equality of opportunity and are successful in eliminating all forms of discrimination. The school promotes community cohesion exceptionally well. It is right at the heart of its community and has successfully drawn together children and adults from a very wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Links with schools in other parts of the world are also developing very well. Communication with and the involvement of parents and carers is outstanding. The school provides access to a wide range of adult learning opportunities and welcomes parents as visitors and helpers. For example, during the inspection parents and carers attended a celebration assembly and the school production in great numbers, revealing their pride and enthusiasm for the school. They also support the work of the school through their commitment to the Thorpe Community Association.

There is a clear sense of purpose, with everyone committed to school improvement and no-one resting on their laurels. Planning for improvement involves everyone. For example, the pupils are currently being consulted about their preferred ways of learning. Challenging targets are set and often achieved, although there is no taking the easy option. Governors do an excellent job; they are very knowledgeable about the school and are leaders of its work in the community. They are also proactive in supporting improvements and in evaluating the quality of provision. Statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding, are met effectively, contributing to the excellent care that pupils receive.

The school provides excellent value for money. The available resources are used wisely

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and contribute significantly to pupils' outstanding progress. For example, the school rightly places significant importance on the continued professional development of staff, enabling them to enhance their skills. Teaching assistants make an excellent contribution to the learning of all pupils, but especially in meeting the needs of those who sometimes struggle and helping others to master English. Subject leaders make a major contribution to driving up standards.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The Nursery and Reception class are made up of a very high proportion of children who start school speaking little or no English. A high percentage of children also have special educational needs. Attainment on entry is low compared with that expected of children of this age. This is especially the case in communication, language and literacy. However, children make exceptional progress. This is because the quality of teaching and leadership and management are outstanding. As a result, by the time children are ready to join Year 1, their attainment, whilst still a bit below the expected average, has improved significantly.

Children settle in quickly. The quality of care they receive from all staff is exemplary. They respond with great enthusiasm to the excellent range of learning opportunities provided for them, both in the classroom and in the school grounds. During the inspection, an expedition to look at and photograph flowers generated great excitement when a duck was discovered sitting on ten eggs. The children's measured response typified their rapidly developing maturity. Children play and work together exceptionally well and exhibit great joy in their learning. Every opportunity is taken to promote

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children's speaking and listening skills. Again, progress is rapid, laying the foundation for their continued success as they progress through the school.

Staff are ever vigilant to meet children's needs. Successes and concerns are shared with parents and carers, who have justifiable faith that staff will give their children the best possible experience. Assessment of progress is thorough and frequent. The response to any child who shows the slightest risk of falling behind is consistently prompt and effective.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of education the school provides for their children. Their views correlate closely with those of inspectors.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorpe Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 71 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 459 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	36	51	33	46	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	44	62	26	37	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	54	31	44	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	42	38	54	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	54	31	44	2	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	33	46	33	46	4	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	41	40	56	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	28	39	33	46	2	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	49	31	44	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	29	41	34	48	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	35	49	28	39	2	3	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	38	54	29	41	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	36	51	33	46	1	1	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorpe Primary School, Peterborough, PE3 9UG

You may recall I visited recently with three colleagues to inspect your school. I do not think you will be surprised to know that we found your school is outstanding, which makes it amongst the best. I am aware that many of you and your parents think so too.

You make excellent progress, especially those of you who do not always find learning easy. Those of you who do not speak English as your first language also do very well.

This is because your teachers and teaching assistants give you all the help you need. They provide you with lots of interesting activities that help you to learn successfully.

For your part, your behaviour is superb and we were all very impressed by how hard you try during lessons. Best of all are the ways in which you all get on so well together and help each other. Well done.

Even though your school is outstanding, your headteacher, staff and governors are always looking for ways to make it even better. With this in mind, we are asking them to keep working on the methods they currently use to help you learn in English and mathematics. By doing this, we believe you are likely to reach even higher standards.

Keep on working hard. I hope you are all successful and do well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Godfrey Bancroft

Lead inspector

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