

# Thorner's Church of England Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113804
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	338243
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 February 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Graeme Bassett

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>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	68
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ross Jones
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alison Johnstone
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Litton Cheney Dorchester Dorset DT2 9AU
<b>Telephone number</b>	01308 482410
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<b>Email address</b>	office@thorners.dorset.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons and observed five teachers teaching for approximately five hours. Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, teachers, other staff, governors, groups of pupils and some parents. They looked at pupils' books, teachers' planning and assessment files, statutory school policies, the school improvement plan, curricular planning documents, pupils' tracking and assessment records, evaluations of teaching carried out by the school and the minutes of governing body meetings. Observations were made of pupils in assembly, on the playground and in the dining hall. The team also analysed questionnaires, including 25 returned from parents and carers, 35 from pupils and 11 from staff.

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

- the attainment of pupils in Key Stage 1 in reading and writing to determine whether teachers plan sufficiently challenging work for all groups of pupils, but especially the more able
- the evaluation of standards of work in Key Stage 2 to ascertain whether pupils, especially boys, make enough progress
- the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in Year 6
- whether leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the work of the school sufficiently well to enable them to promote the high expectations necessary to raise standards in all classes, especially in reading and writing.

## Information about the school

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- whether leaders and managers at all levels monitor and evaluate the work of the school sufficiently well to enable them to promote the high expectations necessary to raise standards in all classes, especially in reading and writing.

**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?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

This is a good and caring school where pupils are very happy and extend a warm welcome to visitors that reflects their open and good relationships with each other. Their behaviour is outstanding and contributes extremely well to the purposeful atmosphere in each classroom and to pupils' good progress.

The leadership and management of the headteacher are good and effective. She has successfully fostered a dedicated staff with a shared vision and a clear understanding of what needs to be done to maintain and improve pupils' achievement. Senior staff and governors take an active role in monitoring and evaluating developments, and leadership at all levels is good. The headteacher, staff and governors work conscientiously to build good community cohesion through strong links between pupils, parents and the local neighbourhood and, as a result, the school is held in high esteem. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The improvement of pupils' writing is correctly identified as a priority and is supported by effective whole-school actions such as teaching phonics in ability groups. New assessment procedures have also been established for writing and mathematics and these records are helping to inform the planning of lessons so that teaching and learning are improving quickly. Consequently, the school's capacity to sustain further improvements is good.

Children enter the Reception class with skills broadly as expected for their age. They build satisfactorily upon their previous learning and, when they enter Year 1, some have exceeded expectations in all areas of learning while a few continue to have weaknesses in literacy. The times that they work alongside the children from the pre-school group are beneficial, but children are unsettled by being taught in different class bases as the day evolves.

Because the school is small and also good at supporting pupils' learning effectively, especially that of lower-attaining pupils, many new pupils transfer into year groups across the school after the Reception year. As a result, the school has a higher than average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in each year group. When judging the overall attainment of each year group, this makes comparisons with national data unreliable. By looking at the books of pupils in Year 6, however, it is evident that most pupils make good progress and that most are reaching above-average levels in English, mathematics and science.

The quality of teaching is good overall. All adults provide good care, guidance and support to all pupils. The strength in teaching is evident in the mixed-aged classes where teachers are good at matching work to the needs of different pupils. However, there are times when teachers do not use assessment data effectively enough to set

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clear targets that will help pupils to know what they need to do to improve. The curriculum is good and adapted effectively to the mixed-aged classes; links between subjects are developing well. As a result, pupils enjoy their work and sustain their concentration well. Most pupils say they feel safe in school and know who to talk to if they have problems.

**What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Provide a stable base for Reception children throughout the day so that they can benefit more fully from learning alongside the Fledglings pre-school group.
- Ensure that teachers make better use of assessment records when setting individual targets so that pupils understand what they have to do to improve their work.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****2**

Pupils' attainment is above average and they make good progress. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well and make good progress but their attainment is still below the national average.

From observations in the classrooms it is now apparent that the teaching of phonics in mixed-aged ability groups is proving successful. Falling attainment in writing has been reversed and pupils are showing growing confidence in both their reading and writing. Stories displaying good use of imagery are a significant development and pupils are beginning to enjoy writing and to be inspired to write at more length. The quality of music is excellent and many pupils display their instrumental prowess by playing in the band.

The vast majority of pupils are polite and courteous. Attendance is good and most pupils arrive on time. Pupils' contributions to the school and wider neighbourhood are good, with many of them accepting responsibilities in the school and participating in events in the community. Their workplace skills and preparedness for their next school are satisfactory. Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work and their social and moral development is good. They have a good understanding of how to remain healthy. The inspectors found that behaviour is excellent overall, even though a small number of pupils expressed some concerns about the behaviour of a few of their peers.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

### How effective is the provision?

The teachers create a purposeful atmosphere within the classrooms. Most displays have a strong representation of pupils' work, ranging from writing and science to art and history. In class, teachers and teaching assistants ask probing questions that help pupils to develop their ideas and skills. For example, Year 6 pupils set up a science investigation to dissolve sugar. They were prompted by the teacher's very searching questions to evolve their own experiments and were still discussing their decisions over lunch the next day. Assessment records are thorough and plot effectively each pupil's progress. However, some teachers do not always make sufficient use of this information to set individual targets so that pupils, and their parents, know what they need to do to improve.

The recent development of the curriculum, with its creative links through literacy, science, geography and history, has inspired greater interest and enthusiasm among the pupils. Well-planned use of information and communication technology, including the interactive whiteboards, also enhances pupils' reading and writing. The wide range of out-of-lesson activities, including visits and a residential trip, provides valuable opportunities to extend pupils' skills and interests.

The staff have extremely good relationships with pupils and they show genuine concern about each individual pupil's welfare and happiness. Pupils respond to the purposeful atmosphere in classrooms with a determination to improve their work. Many parents report that staff liaise well with them and that home/school support and communication, including information about their child's achievements, are good.

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*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

**How effective are leadership and management?**

Leaders and managers drive this school forward and they effectively share their ambitions for the future with the wider school community. As a result, clear priorities are identified in the school improvement plan and initiatives to raise attainment in reading and writing are helping to accelerate pupils' progress.

The teachers who have responsibility for literacy, mathematics and science frequently analyse pupils' achievement and devise good action plans to develop their subjects. These developments are having a marked impact on pupils' work and are bringing about a rise in achievement, especially in reading and writing. The manager responsible for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities takes an active role in the school's assessment procedures through robust monitoring and the evaluation of pupils' progress.

The governors are fully aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the school and make an effective contribution. The school promotes equality of opportunity while tackling discrimination; staff take great care to make sure that all pupils are involved in all that the school does. The governors ensure that the school's safeguarding procedures are good and that all statutory requirements including child protection and risk assessment are reviewed regularly and approved. Community cohesion is very good at local levels and is developing well in the national and global contexts. For example, exceptional endeavours by the governors and headteacher in the village community have enabled the school to benefit from the shared use of a new village hall.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children's skills on entry to the Reception class are broadly in line with expected levels for their age in most areas of learning. However, there are some children who have weaknesses in communication, language and literacy. Good assessment records show that most children then enter Year 1 with attainment broadly as expected in most areas of learning, although some still have weaknesses in reading and writing. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall.

The children are often engaged together enthusiastically in creative activities, such as painting, modelling and role play, with children from the Fledglings pre-school group. However, arrangements whereby they are often moved unnecessarily into another temporary base as the day evolves are not conducive to good learning as this disrupts children's interest and concentration. Because of this, the quality of teaching and of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is no more than satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures are good and provision for children's welfare, especially for those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is good.

*These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	<b>3</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

## Views of parents and carers

The large majority of parents and carers who replied to the questionnaire and those who spoke to inspectors expressed their full support for the school. They frequently said how impressed they were by the improvements that the staff and headteacher make to the school and especially by the personal care given to all the pupils.

Most parents think that Thorner's is a good and caring school. Very few expressed concerns, but four mentioned some unease about how the school helps them to support



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their child's learning. The inspection team found that teachers met most parents each term but did not use pupils' targets sufficiently well to help parents understand how to support their children.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thorner's Church of England 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 25 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 68 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	14	56	11	44	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	15	60	10	40	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	13	52	8	32	4	16	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	12	48	9	36	4	16	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	12	48	11	44	1	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	12	48	8	32	5	20	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	15	60	10	40	0	0	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)	13	52	12	48	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	52	9	36	2	8	1	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	52	9	36	3	12	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	52	12	48	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	16	64	9	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	16	64	8	32	0	0	0	0

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"> <li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li> <li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li> <li>■ The quality of teaching.</li> <li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li> <li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li> </ul>
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.**



5 February 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thorner's Church of England VA Primary School, Litton Cheney, Dorset.  
DT2 9AU

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and finding out about your school. We found that Thorner's provides you with a good education. Your behaviour is outstanding and there is a good, caring atmosphere. It was exciting to see how well you are developing your musical skills. Thank you for telling us your very positive views when you completed the questionnaire. It helped us to get a good picture of your school. Well done!

These are the things that we judged to be good in your school.

- Your headteacher provides good leadership and management.
- The teachers and other staff in your school work well as a team and support your headteacher well.
- Teaching is good and your teachers encourage you to answer questions. Because of this, you make good progress and your work is steadily improving. Many of you complete work that is above the average standard for your age.
- The adults provide good care, guidance and support, especially for those of you who find work difficult at times. As a result, you are all developing positive attitudes towards your work and towards each other.
- You have a good understanding of how to remain healthy and keep safe.
- You are very polite and your excellent behaviour helps you to create a positive family feeling around the school.

There are still some ways in which your school could be better. We have asked your headteacher and governors to:

- make it possible for those of you in Reception to stay in the same class base all day and to work more with the Fledglings children
- help teachers to make sure each of you knows what you have to do to improve.

Once again, thank you for your help. You can help further by asking your teachers how you can make your work better.

Yours sincerely

Graeme Bassett

Lead inspector

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