

Thingwall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105051
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	363689
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Kevin Johnson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	203
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Wallace
Headteacher	Danielle Cronin
Date of previous school inspection	05 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Thirteen lessons were observed and seven teachers were seen. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and members of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at national test data and the school's assessments, samples of pupils' work, policies and governing body minutes as well as documentation relating to the curriculum and safeguarding. Also taken into account were 105 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those completed by pupils and staff members.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How provision affects pupils' achievement in mathematics.
- How well children learn in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the accuracy of leaders' evaluation of this stage.
- How much leaders' actions have had a positive impact on school improvement.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school in which the very large majority of pupils are White British. A below average proportion of pupils is known to be eligible for free school meals. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is also below average. The school has achieved Artsmark and Activemark and holds Healthy Schools status.

On site before and after-school care, which is not managed by the governing body, has been inspected separately.

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 school in which pupils achieve well. Leaders and managers have maintained strengths, for example, in pupils' attainment and the quality of care, guidance and support, and have built well on other areas to bring about good improvement since the last inspection.

Some of pupils' personal development outcomes are outstanding. This is a reflection of the excellent care, guidance and support provided. Pupils are happy in school, and behave well. Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. Because of the school's excellent planning for community cohesion, pupils' exploration of Thingwall's Viking heritage provides them with opportunities to make an outstanding contribution to their community. This is extended through productive links with schools that share a similar heritage.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given a good start. They enter Reception with abilities generally in line with expectations for their age. Some are more advanced. They make good progress and most achieve good levels of development by the time they enter Year 1. Good progress continues in Years 1 and 2 and by the end of Key Stage 1, attainment is consistently above average. Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2 is consistently high and overall there is good progress from Years 3 to 6. Nevertheless, mathematics, although above average, is a relative weakness and has not reached the levels seen in English. This is an area for development throughout the school.

Teaching is good. An engaging curriculum ensures that pupils enjoy their learning and achieve well. A particular strength of the curriculum is the way in which pupils apply their information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum.

Leaders and managers have effectively maintained standards and quality. There have been good curriculum developments and improved systems for tracking and assessing pupils' progress. Leaders have established outstanding relationships with parents and carers and promote highly effective links with other partners to promote learning and enhance leadership skills. Leaders have evaluated the outcomes of their work accurately and are not complacent about implementing ways of furthering improvements. Overall, the school demonstrates a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in mathematics throughout the school by:
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are always sufficiently challenged
 - focusing more on the application of mathematics in practical ways across the curriculum
 - sharing the best practice in the teaching of mathematics throughout the school and evaluating the impact.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' generally good behaviour in lessons, and their willingness to, 'have a go', contribute to their good learning and progress. When in small groups, they work together effectively because this provides good opportunities to make decisions and solve problems for themselves. A good example was in a history lesson, where groups used a range of history books and laptops to research facts about Aztec life, having first decided for themselves how each group member would contribute. Pupils enjoy literacy and numeracy lessons, but say they have few opportunities to solve practical problems in mathematics, for example, in the outside environment. Pupils generally know their targets and what they need to do to improve. They are increasingly involved in assessing their own work. A few pupils report that they are not sure about how well they are doing.

Pupils make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave the school. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has been consistently above average over the last five years. School assessments suggest that this is likely to continue. Attainment in mathematics has been at a lower level than in English but current assessments indicate an upturn in performance. This can be attributed to the intensive focus the school has put on mathematics, augmented by the effective leadership and expertise of the newly appointed coordinator. Despite the promising signs, the school recognises that strategies are to be embedded and outcomes evaluated, particularly for more-able pupils, before a true measure of their success is evident. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Well-tailored individual plans and targeted support ensure that they are well catered for.

Pupils are invariably polite and well mannered and conduct themselves well around the school. They have an excellent understanding of what it means to maintain a healthy lifestyle and feel entirely safe in school. Pupils are adamant that bullying and racist incidents are not tolerated and are fully confident of support from adults should they need it. They know what constitutes an 'unsafe' situation including those related to cyber-bullying and are mindful of others' safety. Their contribution to the life of the school and involvement in community activities are outstanding. The school council is very active, and the eco-group monitors the school's use of water and energy as part of their 'sustainability watch'. Some take on caring roles as 'buddies' and their work is much appreciated by younger children and their parents. Pupils' generosity is demonstrated, for example, by their efforts to raise funds for the training of rescue dogs. They maintain a high profile in the community by taking part

in local festivals. Given their above average attendance, personal qualities and achievement, pupils are well prepared to secure their future economic well-being.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

There is good learning in most lessons. There is some outstanding teaching but also some that is satisfactory. Teachers generally use resources well, especially ICT, to bring learning to life. Relationships in lessons are very good. Consequently, pupils feel secure and are well motivated. Marking, particularly of pupils' writing, is good and provides some useful pointers for improvement which pupils appreciate. Where learning is outstanding, teachers' excellent subject knowledge is used to plan for and challenge all abilities. Lesson planning and outcomes are evaluated so that the teacher knows the precise starting point for each pupil, building effectively on their previous learning. In some mathematics lessons, however, the more-able pupils are not always suitably challenged and, as a result, do not achieve as well as they might. This is because the best practice seen in the teaching of mathematics is not yet shared effectively throughout the school. Occasionally, the pace of some other lessons is too slow because pupils spend too long listening, and not enough time engaged in productive practical work. Teaching assistants work well alongside teachers. They know pupils well and are sensitive to their varying needs. They make an effective contribution to pupils' learning.

The curriculum enables pupils to achieve well across most subjects. There are good opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills across the curriculum but fewer for pupils to apply mathematical skills in other subjects. Pupils achieve well in ICT. Learning is enhanced through curriculum links with high schools. This gives a particular boost to those who are more gifted or talented in particular subjects. Pupils' learning is further enriched by an impressive range of after-school clubs and other activities outside of lesson times.

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

Parents and carers overwhelmingly share the view that children are exceptionally well cared for. This is endorsed by the pupils themselves. Induction arrangements for those joining the school are excellent as are arrangements for transfer to the next phase. Pupils who are potentially vulnerable are particularly well supported at this time. The school works very effectively with a range of outside agencies to ensure the best possible support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Robust monitoring ensures that good attendance is maintained.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher, supported by a strong governing body, has successfully established an effective senior management team. The opening up of professional development opportunities has been beneficial to all staff. A clearly shared vision has evolved as a result of raised expectations of staff and their unified commitment to further improvement. Monitoring and support, combined with astute appointments to the senior leadership team, have strengthened teachers' knowledge and skills especially in assessment. Some teachers now lead other schools in the development of those skills.

The governing body fulfils its role well. Challenge and support are given in equal measure. Its members are well informed about the schools' progress, and they monitor standards and targets on a regular basis. All forms of discrimination are challenged. While potentially vulnerable learners achieve well alongside others, the governing body continues to monitor the outcome for more-able pupils in mathematics to ensure equality of opportunity. The school has good procedures for safeguarding. All policies and records are robustly checked and updated. Staff members are well trained and are fully aware of safeguarding responsibilities. The school takes good account of safeguarding through the curriculum. This provides good support for pupils as to their understanding of safety issues, and for their well-being. The promotion of community cohesion is exceptional and has a very strong impact on pupils' understanding of the lifestyles of other communities around the globe. Pupils share time with others from schools in the United Kingdom where there are those from different cultural backgrounds. They correspond productively with pupils from schools in Norway and India, and have established initial contact with a Dublin school.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2

The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
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	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and well-managed provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure their good progress. Children are provided with a rich variety of exciting activities, some led by adults, and others that they choose for themselves. During the inspection, children were able to observe the progress of tadpoles developing into frogs, and had opportunities to make their own 'frog puppets' independently. The strong focus on developing knowledge of letters and the sounds they make, means that children approach reading and writing confidently. Children made good attempts, for example, at writing a simple rhyme following their self-initiated singing session. Some exciting mathematical development resulted from their painting and folding paper to make butterflies because every child knew that their pattern was symmetrical and could explain why. Teachers' continual challenge, through questioning children about what they do, results in very well-developed speaking skills. A high priority is given to children's personal, social and emotional development. As a consequence, they are exceptionally well behaved, independent and eager to learn. Provision for children's welfare is good. The classroom is well resourced and visually stimulating for children. Their progress is carefully recorded and information gathered accurately informs the next steps for learning. Relationships with parents and carers are excellent.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A majority of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Their views about the school are overwhelmingly supportive. Very few raised concerns. Those which were raised mostly referred to communication with the school about pupils' progress. Inspectors followed this up by looking into the ways the school informs parents and carers and found the systems used to be far-ranging and accessible. All issues were discussed with school leaders while ensuring that the anonymity of parents and carers was protected.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thingwall 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 105 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 203 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	66	36	34	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	77	73	27	26	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	43	41	53	50	8	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	47	45	43	10	10	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	57	41	39	2	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	46	44	48	46	11	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	44	52	50	5	5	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)	42	40	53	50	3	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	52	50	44	42	6	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	42	51	49	5	5	3	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	46	47	45	5	5	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	55	52	43	41	4	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	61	58	37	35	5	5	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 all 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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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 pupils' 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.



13 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thingwall Primary School, Wirral CH61 7UG

Thank you very much for the friendly welcome you gave to my colleagues and to me when we came to inspect your school recently. Your politeness and good manners made our discussions with you a real pleasure. You gave us a clear picture of how much you enjoy school and of the things you do to help it run smoothly. We also noticed that your attendance is above average. Well done! That is important so do keep it up if you can.

Thingwall is a good school. You make good progress overall, and achieve well. Your standards in English are high. Mathematics standards are above average, but could be better because they are not as high as in English. The grown-ups in school take excellent care of you. That is why you feel very safe and take such good care of one another. We found that your lessons are fun and that your teachers work hard to make them so. They plan some interesting ways for you to learn. We were impressed, especially, by the way you find out more about Vikings by exchanging information with other schools.

Your teachers and the governing body are just as proud of your school as you are and would like it to be even better. To help that to happen, I have asked your school leaders to help you achieve better in mathematics. First, by making sure that all of you, but especially the most able, are given really challenging work to do; second, by giving you all more opportunities to use your mathematics learning in practical ways to solve problems; finally, by making all lessons in mathematics as good as the very best ones.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Johnson
Lead inspector

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