

Thornton Hough Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105015
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	377160
Inspection dates	6–7 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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	161
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Booth
Headteacher	Alison Kershaw
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 12 lessons and observed nine teachers in their classrooms. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff, groups of pupils and parents and carers. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation, including pupils' progress and attainment data, the school's planning documents, policies, procedures and records and documentation related to safeguarding pupils. They reviewed information provided by parents and carers in 62 completed questionnaires. They also took into account the views pupils in Key Stage 2 and staff expressed in the questionnaires they returned.

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

- The progress made by more-able pupils in Key Stage 1.
- The effectiveness and impact of leaders and managers at all levels in ensuring brisk rates of progress for all learners.
- The impact of leadership in ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching across the school, with particular reference to Key Stage 1.

Information about the school

The school is slightly smaller than most other primary schools, although it has increased in size since its last inspection. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below that usually found. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Since its previous inspection the school has renewed its Healthy School status. It has also gained the Activemark. Before-and after-school care clubs are provided on site by an independent company. These provisions are subject to separate inspection by Ofsted and reports are available on the Ofsted website.

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

This is an outstanding school. Very effective leadership has ensured continuous and ongoing improvements, enabling the school to sustain and build on its history of high achievement. Pupils thrive in an environment where every child is known, cared for and valued, and this is helping them to achieve excellence in both their personal and their academic development.

Most children join the Reception class with the level of skills that are expected for their age. From a flying start in the extremely effective Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils go on to reach high levels of attainment by the end of Year 6. This has been a consistent picture for the last five years.

The high overall quality of provision, including excellent teaching and a vibrant curriculum, is a key contributory factor to pupils' outstanding achievement. Pastoral care is excellent, relationships are very supportive and the school has a well-developed family ethos. Pupils told the inspection team that, 'All the staff care about us; they keep us safe and are always kind.' The school is highly inclusive and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are enabled to make the same excellent progress as their peers. Partnerships with local secondary schools and with the nearby City Learning Centre are exceptionally strong and contribute significantly to enhancing provision in the school in technology, music, modern foreign languages and many other areas of the curriculum.

The headteacher provides clearly-focused strategic leadership. Supported by an effective deputy headteacher, she has created a very strong team ethos, with a clear focus on continuous school improvement. Very effective subject leaders contribute strongly to taking the school forward. Leaders are not complacent. The school usually measures success against highly aspirational targets. Areas for development and improvement are clearly and correctly identified and the school takes appropriate actions to address them. For example, although the vast majority of pupils reached the nationally expected levels at the end of Year 2 in 2011, the proportion reaching the higher levels was only average. The school was not satisfied with this, recognizing that it did not match the substantial proportion reaching the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 2. This issue has been addressed very decisively in the current year by strengthening provision in Key Stage 1 and by close monitoring of outcomes for more-able pupils. Although this is still a work in progress, early signs of improvement are already apparent and inspection evidence shows

pupils are making excellent progress in Key Stage 1 and in Year 3. Extremely accurate self-evaluation is based on systematic monitoring and rigorous assessment, with a clear analysis of need and outcomes. All these factors, together with the very many skills and talents of staff and leaders, including an extremely knowledgeable and effective governing body, combine to demonstrate that the school has outstanding capacity to continue to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the percentage of pupils in Key Stage 1 that attain above the average level by the end of 2012, to match the proportion that attain highly at the end of Year 6 by more rigorously monitoring pupils' progress against clearly defined targets for improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Pupils' attitudes to school are extremely positive. They are responsive learners, interested and absorbed in lessons, eager to offer their ideas in discussions, reflective and articulate. They collaborate productively when working with a partner or in a group. They listen carefully and see tasks through to completion and they are increasingly able to evaluate the quality of their own work with accuracy. Across the school, attainment is high. Evidence from assessment data for the last school year confirmed that progress was outstanding. Lesson observations and scrutiny of work in pupils' books all confirmed that pupils across the school, including more-able pupils in Key Stage 1, are progressing at a brisk rate in the current term. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make excellent progress, as a result of the very well-targeted support the school provides for them. Pupils' overall achievement is excellent and this is matched by their interest and enjoyment in learning.

Pupils show an excellent understanding of issues around personal safety. They form very good relationships with each other and with the adults in school and they say they are confident help is on hand if they encounter any problems. Pupils and parents and carers strongly agree that school is a place of safety. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the range of activities provided to support their health, fitness and well-being. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example, as influential school councillors. They are enthusiastic fundraisers for charities at home and abroad. All of this, together with their excellent basic skills, contributes extremely well to preparing them for the next stages in their education. Pupils show a mature understanding of the sound moral values the school promotes and this is reflected in their excellent behaviour and considerate attitudes. Attendance is good overall, with a further rise this term resulting from the school's ongoing drive for improvement.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

How effective is the provision?

The excellent quality of teaching is contributing very strongly to pupils' learning and progress and to their personal development. Lessons are planned very well to take the range of learners' needs into account and the pace of learning is brisk; this is helping pupils to progress very well in lessons. Imaginative teaching strategies are often used to very good effect, bringing learning alive for pupils. This was the case, for example, in a literacy lesson in Year 4, where pupils had the opportunity to develop their understanding of characters' motivation in the story they had been reading, through taking part in a range of role play activities. This allowed them to question and challenge characters directly, with pupils taking turns to go into role. High-quality oral and written work resulted, with pupils totally absorbed in exploring why characters had behaved as they did in the story and eager to express well-developed ideas in the writing session that followed.

Regular and very effective assessment means that class teachers have a clear overview of progress and this helps them identify pupils who may be underachieving and those who require extra support. Focused support is timely and effective. Well-trained and skilled teaching assistants work in professional partnership with class teachers and contribute extremely well to all pupils' learning and progress and particularly to that of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The school's rich and varied curriculum is supported very well by very good provision for information and communication technology. The school uses the International Primary Curriculum to excellent effect, bringing subjects together in topics and themes that are interesting, relevant and engaging for pupils. Learning activities provide appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities, including the more-able; this is equally the case in both key stages. The curriculum is exceptionally well enriched by opportunities for pupils to develop skills in sports, the arts, especially music, and three modern foreign languages. A range of visitors and visits, including several residential trips, contributes very effectively to promoting pupils' academic, personal, social, health and citizenship education. Well-chosen support strategies for pupils

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

with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensure they enjoy full access to learning and are included in everything on offer.

Pastoral care is excellent and the school works sensitively to support those pupils and their families whose circumstances potentially make them most vulnerable. This is helping to break down barriers to learning and progress that pupils occasionally encounter. Attendance and punctuality are promoted very effectively. Extremely effective links with several local secondary schools benefit pupils at transition to the next stage of their education and also contribute significantly to enriching the curriculum, with many examples of collaborative curriculum projects. The school works extremely well with a wide range of agencies that support pupils' health, welfare, social and learning needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
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?

Staff and the governing body wholeheartedly share the headteacher's firm commitment to continuous improvement and her ambition to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils. Staff at all levels, contribute very effectively to helping drive forward improvement initiatives. The school plans appropriate actions for ensuring that pupils' high attainment is sustained and that their learning and progress are promoted very well. The information gained from regular and rigorous progress reviews is used extremely well to ensure appropriate levels of challenge and support in learning activities. Expectations are high and the use of individual learning targets is being developed very effectively. The school tracks the progress of more-able pupils in Key Stage 1, but has not yet set out a precise description of the improved attainment it expects from this group of pupils in the current year, against which to measure how well they are doing. The actively involved and exceptionally well-informed governing body challenges and holds the school to account very effectively. A programme of continuous professional development contributes strongly to the high quality of provision, to ensuring consistency in teaching quality across the school, including in Key Stage 1, and to very positive outcomes for pupils.

Parents and carers appreciate all that is done to support their children's welfare. Pupils benefit from the very effective partnership between home and school, which is supported by excellent communications, including regular newsletters, workshops, meetings and questionnaires. The school complies well with statutory requirements for safeguarding, health and safety and child protection, through well-managed procedures and an ongoing review of their effectiveness. Its promotion of equal opportunities and access to educational entitlement is mostly effective: the school is very inclusive; discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Work to ensure high attainment for more-able pupils in Key Stage 1, to bring them in line with similar pupils across the school, is progressing well, but is still at an early stage. The school

contributes well to community cohesion through an extensive range of partnerships in and beyond the community, and through a range of developing international links. Partnerships with other schools, including schools within and beyond the local authority area, are particularly beneficial in helping to support pupil's personal and academic development. Partnerships with sports and music providers are very strong and contribute extremely well to pupils' cultural and skills development and to their health and fitness.

These are the grades for the 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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Reception class make excellent progress and develop very positive attitudes, becoming happy, interested learners. As a result, by the end of the year, most children are working above the expected levels for their age. All of the children, including the more-able, make excellent progress in relation to their starting points, because ongoing assessment is accurate, with the consequence that activities are extremely well matched to their individual learning needs. The quality of teaching is excellent and children are provided with an appropriate balance between activities they choose for themselves and those led by adults. This supports the development of independent learning skills very well. Assessment is informed by evidence gathered through observations of the children in their activities and staff use this information extremely well to help them plan the next steps in the children's learning. The setting is very effective in identifying and supporting children with additional learning needs.

Children interact well with each other and enjoy warm, trusting relationships with the caring staff; as a result, they grow in confidence, they are happy and secure and ready to learn. They settle quickly because induction procedures are sensitive and staff establish very positive relationships with parents and carers. Excellent communications keep them well informed about their children's learning and progress and excellent advice and guidance are provided on how to extend and support learning at home. The setting is led and managed extremely well and very effective team work contributes strongly to positive outcomes for the children. Provision is monitored regularly and this supports ongoing improvements. Procedures to ensure children's welfare are very good and meet all requirements.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

Views of parents and carers

All of those who responded to the questionnaire said they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their children’s experience at the school. Parents and carers who met with a member of the inspection team commented on how eager their children are to come to school each day and on their confidence in the staff team. They remarked on the very good home-school communications, saying how they appreciate the fact that the school consults them regularly through questionnaires and meetings. Their comments indicated that parents and carers place a high value on the school’s caring ethos and that they feel they are very well informed about their children’s progress and attainment. In the questionnaire responses, a few parents and carers raised issues about behaviour management. Inspectors observed behaviour in classrooms and around the school, had discussions with staff and pupils and reviewed behavioural records. Their findings are in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thornton Hough 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 62 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 161 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	85	9	15	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	54	87	6	10	0	0	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	46	74	14	23	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	79	10	16	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	51	82	11	18	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	77	12	19	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	42	68	18	29	2	3	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)	45	73	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	44	71	16	26	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	66	15	24	5	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	34	55	23	37	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	51	82	11	18	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	52	84	10	16	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 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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 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.



8 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornton Hough Primary School, Wirral, CH63 1JJ

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave the inspectors when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. We enjoyed our visit very much and it was lovely to meet you all.

We found that Thornton Hough Primary is an outstanding school and that it is a very happy place for you to learn in and grow together. Your education gets off to an excellent start in the Reception class and you successfully maintain the positive attitudes to learning that you establish there as you move up through the school. You are extremely well behaved and polite young people. Your attendance is good and is continuing to improve. You work hard in your lessons, enjoy your work very much and get on very well with each other and with the grown-ups in school. They look after you extremely well. They work very hard, too, to make sure that you are provided with excellent teaching and a really interesting curriculum and you told us how much you enjoy your lessons. Because of all this, you are making excellent progress in your learning and your overall attainment is high.

This is something we have asked the school's leaders to do, because we think it will help to make your school even better.

- Make sure that more-able pupils in Key Stage 1 do as well as they possibly can, so that the proportion of Year 2 pupils who achieve Level 3 in assessments at the end of the summer term is at least above average in 2012.

You can help by continuing to do your best and by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future,

Yours sincerely,

Diane Auton
Lead inspector

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