

# Thornbury Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113329
<b>Local Authority</b>	Plymouth [113329]
<b>Inspection number</b>	311216
<b>Inspection dates</b>	29–30 January 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Huard

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	233
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Chris Cox
<b>Headteacher</b>	Claire Hardisty
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	2 December 2003
<b>School address</b>	Miller Way Estover Plymouth PL6 8UL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01752 302600
<b>Fax number</b>	01752 302640

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<b>Age group</b>	4-11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and there is a Resource Base for ten pupils with speech and communication difficulties. The attainment of children when they enter the Reception classes is broadly in line with age-related expectations, although sometimes pupils' communication and language skills are a little lower. The headteacher took up post in the summer of 2007.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory and improving school providing a sound education for its pupils. It has the overwhelming support of parents, who appreciate its caring ethos, the approachability of staff and its increased focus on raising standards. As one commented, 'I wouldn't want my children to attend any other school in the area.'

Standards are rising and the key to this improvement is the strong leadership of the headteacher. A robust monitoring programme identified weaknesses in English, mathematics and science and the school is tackling these appropriately. Because teaching and learning have improved, standards are now broadly average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The satisfactory provision in the Reception class ensures that children get an acceptable start to their schooling. In Years 1 to 6, a focus on extending pupils' vocabulary has resulted in significant advances in pupils' writing. However, basic spelling and punctuation, although improving, are still not good enough. These bring down the standard of otherwise exciting and imaginative work. In science and mathematics, pupils have too little scope to solve problems, experiment and record their findings. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress, but pupils supported by the Speech and Language Resource Base make good progress towards their targets.

'Since the Jamie Oliver campaign it's been healthy all the way,' explained one pupil solemnly when asked about pupils' diet. However, he perceptibly brightened as he and his peers went on to extol the delights of the school salad bar, promoted by the school council, and showed an excellent understanding of the importance of diet and exercise. The pupils enjoy school and this is reflected in the good attendance of most pupils. However, attendance is average overall because it is adversely affected by the small number of parents who take their children on holiday during term time, despite the best efforts of the school to discourage this practice. Pupils are well looked after and they receive good support for their personal development. A wide range of rewards and sanctions serve as incentives for good behaviour and care for each other. They enthusiastically acknowledge that the setting of targets and careful marking help them to understand what they need to do to make progress in their learning, and the support and guidance they receive are good.

Pupils have positive attitudes towards their work. They enjoy learning because teachers plan carefully, make an effort to motivate them and ensure lessons are interesting. However, sometimes the pace of learning slips because teachers talk for too long. They tell pupils too much, leaving them with too little to find out for themselves, with the result that pupils, particularly the more able, are not always sufficiently challenged. A wide range of visits and visitors makes a good contribution to the satisfactory curriculum. However, at present there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to develop their investigative and enquiry skills in mathematics and science.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Subject leaders have an adequate overview of their subjects but their monitoring and analytical skills are not always sharp enough. However, morale is high. Staff know how well the school is doing and challenging targets and appropriate strategies to bring about improvements have been embraced by the whole-school team.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 3

Children in the Reception class make satisfactory progress. Most join Year 1 having reached the standards appropriate for their age. Teaching is satisfactory. That directly related to set themes and topics is often good, but other tasks do not always sufficiently challenge the children. All the required areas of learning are covered and there is a sound balance between those activities led by the teacher and those that children choose for themselves. Lively, interesting themes make the structured curriculum and learning relevant and exciting, but this is offset by the lack of stimulus and more limited value of tasks provided through supplementary activities which the children choose for themselves. The care and attention given to children's welfare are good. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is an appropriate emphasis on the development of basic skills, which is in line with whole-school policy, and these are developing satisfactorily. However, monitoring has failed to pick up the inconsistencies in the curriculum offered.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Plan and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop and practise their literacy skills, especially spelling and punctuation, in all subjects.
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to solve problems, investigate and experiment in mathematics and science.
- Increase the pace of lessons and ensure pupils, particularly the more able, are sufficiently challenged.
- Develop the role of key staff so that they play a more prominent part in monitoring the effectiveness of their subjects and areas.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

In Years 1 and 2, pupils are making satisfactory progress and standards are broadly in line with those expected. In Years 3 to 6, achievement is satisfactory. Standards in writing are rapidly improving, pupils have good ideas and their vocabulary is good. However, basic spelling and punctuation skills are not as good as they should be. In addition, pupils' problem-solving and enquiry skills are insufficiently developed in mathematics and science. The school broadly met the targets set in English last summer, but not those in mathematics. Targets set for this year are challenging but realistic.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 2

Good behaviour, secure relationships and self-confident pupils are all evident in this lively school. Pupils are reflective and thoughtful and develop positive social and moral attitudes. There are good opportunities to explore the faiths and traditions of other cultures, which enhances pupils' understanding of growing up in a multi-ethnic society. Pupils show a good awareness of how to stay safe both in and out of school. Pupils eagerly take on responsibilities, such as fundraising for local, national and international charities, and show a mature

responsibility towards the environment. Peer mediators help to resolve any problems in the playground before they develop into anything more serious. The highly effective school council enables pupils to have a voice and is actively involved in the current whole-school project researching pupils' learning. Pupils' satisfactory literacy and numeracy skills and well-developed personal skills, especially confidence and self-esteem, help to ensure they are suitably prepared for the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 3**

Teachers plan lessons carefully. They know what they expect pupils to learn and lessons are lively and interesting. Consequently, pupils enjoy their work. Much of the teaching observed during the inspection was good. However, this good teaching is not sufficiently widespread to ensure that all pupils make the best progress possible. One weakness is that the pace of lessons is sometimes too slow because too much time is spent on lengthy explanations. This means that pupils, particularly those who are more able, have too few opportunities for using their initiative in some lessons in order to consolidate their learning. Pupils with learning difficulties receive appropriate support in the classroom, which enables them to make satisfactory progress towards their targets. Marking is good. It usually identifies what pupils need to do to make progress and pupils say it helps them understand how to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 3**

The school has appropriately increased the emphasis on developing pupils' key skills in English, mathematics and science and overall, the provision is satisfactory. However, pupils have too few opportunities to develop their problem-solving and enquiry skills in mathematics and science. The school's provision for art is particularly strong and exemplified by the highly attractive and vibrant displays of pupils' work around the school. There is good provision for pupils attending the Resource Base and provision for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory. Good provision is made for all aspects of pupils' personal development. A wide range of visits, visitors and school clubs enriches pupils' learning and promotes positive attitudes towards school.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The school cares for its pupils well. Procedures to ensure that pupils are kept safe and secure, including those relating to child protection, are well established and staff are familiar with them. Pupils are secure in the knowledge that they can seek help and advice from their teachers and other adults if they have a problem or concern. The school has very good links with a range of outside agencies to promote pupils' well-being. Systems for checking pupils' academic progress are improving and as a result the school is beginning to identify more effectively areas requiring improvement. The tracking of progress for pupils with learning difficulties is good and gives a clear view of overall progress. Good links with local secondary schools ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

The headteacher is the driving force for school improvement. She is clear thinking, has well-developed analytical skills and involves and motivates people very strongly. She has successfully helped staff and governors to reach a realistic and accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses and all now understand how well the school is performing. As a result, the school is satisfactorily placed to improve further. The school development plan identifies appropriate priorities and is already having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. For example, improvements in the school's tracking procedures mean that pupils who may have fallen behind are now identified more quickly and given appropriate support. Consequently, pupils' progress is accelerating. The roles of key staff are developing appropriately, although their ability to check standards and identify what can be done to remedy weaknesses is not yet sufficiently developed. The governors are playing a satisfactory role in the strategic development of the school and ask the school challenging questions to hold it to account. However, some governors do not visit the school often enough to see it in operation and this limits their awareness of its work.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

31 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Thornbury Primary School, Estover, Plymouth PL6 8UL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. You certainly seem to be very happy and it was good to hear how you enjoy your work and all the extra activities in which you are involved. We think your school gives you a satisfactory education and is working hard to make it better.

This is what we thought about your school:

- You behave well and are really keen to learn.
- You are doing much better in English, mathematics and science this year.
- You clearly understand the importance of eating healthily at school and taking physical exercise. The salad bar is fabulous – well done school council for promoting it so well!
- The curriculum covers all the subjects you are supposed to learn and you enjoy the visits and visitors, which bring learning alive for you.
- Teachers help you to make satisfactory progress and you say learning is often made fun.
- The teachers and staff take good care of you while you are in school.
- Your headteacher understands very well what must be done to make your school even better.

Some things that can be improved:

- We think you need to improve your spelling and punctuation and have asked the school to give you more opportunities to practise your literacy skills in all subjects.
- We would like you to have more opportunities to solve problems in mathematics and to plan and carry out more investigations and experiments for yourselves in science.
- We have asked teachers not to make the introduction to lessons too long so that you have time to find out more for yourselves.
- Teachers need to be more involved in judging how well you are doing and in making decisions as to how the school could be even better. We are glad you enjoy your school and hope you will continue to work hard.

Very best wishes

Mrs Christine Huard Lead inspector

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Lead inspector