

Follow-through Inspection Report

Thorntree Primary School

March 2004

The Inspection

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education HMIE published a report on standards and quality in Thorntree Primary School in October 2001 following their inspection of the school in June 2001. Working with the school, the education authority prepared an action plan indicating how they would address the main points for action identified in the original report.

After consultation with HMIE, it was agreed that this follow-through report would be the responsibility of the education authority. Members of the Education Improvement Service visited the school in June 2003 to assess the extent to which the school was continuing to improve the quality of its work and to evaluate progress made in responding to the main points for action in the initial report.

Continuous Improvement

The Main Points for Action indicated that developments should build on and continue with the work in progress while addressing the specific points highlighted throughout the report.

The head teacher and her staff moved quickly in establishing working parties, targets, priorities and key personnel as part of the school Action Plan. Developments were therefore underway at the start of session 2001/02.

Throughout that session work progressed according to plan and within the realistic timescale set for the developments.

The authority personnel, staff tutors and a programme of inservice were available to support the head teacher and her staff as required.

Regular review meetings with the pastoral adviser and head teacher took place to ensure the outcomes of the Action Plan were being overtaken satisfactorily and to ensure the support was in place.

The head teacher retired from her post in December 2002 and the deputy head acted as head teacher until June 2003. In August 2003 an acting head teacher from the staff of another school was appointed. There have also been some other major changes in the teaching staff from the time of the original inspection. The work of the school however has continued in a very satisfactory manner. An ethos of teamwork, loyalty and commitment to the pupils exists within the staff and they are confident in the support given by the promoted staff.

Attainment has continued to improve in all areas.

Progress Towards the Main Points For Action

The initial inspection report identified 3 main points for action. This section evaluates the progress made with each of the action points and the resulting improvements for pupils and other stakeholders.

Main point for action 1

In taking further steps to raise pupils' attainment, the school should continue to develop programmes in shape, position and movement and in writing, and review the organisation of some teaching groups in mathematics.

The school has met this recommendation.

The head teacher and staff undertook a review of the programme of study for mathematics. Appropriate resources were purchased, including software packages, to support the teaching and learning within this area. A series of in-house staff development activities led by the head teacher and depute head teacher, were set up to ensure staff had clear guidelines and support on strategies to be employed in their teaching and the effective use of the new and existing resources. Amendments were made to the programme of study to include more opportunities for the pupils to discuss shape, position and movement during the oral maths sessions. A programme of homework activities was also devised and used to consolidate and revise the work carried out within the classroom. Parent Information Leaflets were written and used in conjunction with the homework programme to inform parents of the new developments and to support them in working with their children at home.

Pupils have a better understanding of and are now more confident in working with two-and-three dimensional shape.

The head teacher and depute head teacher, in consultation with the staff, carried out a complete review of the setting arrangements and organisation of the teaching groups for mathematics to ensure the needs of all pupils were being met effectively. Attainment information, pupil progress reports and teachers professional opinion and knowledge of their pupils were used in identifying the areas where the pace of learning could be increased, the more able pupils requiring greater challenge and those pupils in need of more support or individualised programmes. Deployment of support staff was also reviewed.

Teachers at the early stages were given further support and training in the teaching approaches to be adopted and in making effective use of the materials and resources contained within the writing programme to ensure continuity and progression and a consistent approach to the teaching of early writing. The writing tutors in line with the authority's improvement programme in writing also gave support at the early stages and throughout the school.

A revised programme of study in writing for P1 to P7 was devised and implemented at the beginning of session 2002/03. The programme was monitored through observation, sampling pupils' work, staff discussion

and tracking of National Test results to evaluate and measure impact and improvement. Evidence from these evaluations demonstrates an improvement in pupils' writing skills.

Main point for action 2

Teachers should continue to develop the use of ICT to support pupils' learning, especially in mathematics.

The school has met this recommendation.

The school was invited to take part in the authority's initiative to develop the use of ICT throughout the curriculum to support pupils' learning. Staff were involved in the 'Pilot' scheme to implement an identified programme of study at all stages and to evaluate the impact on teaching, learning and attainment.

Support was given by the authority's ICT Tutors. Through their involvement the teachers were able to enhance their own skills, knowledge and understanding in using a variety of software packages to support their pupils' learning throughout the curriculum.

An annual programme of study for each stage was devised and implemented which also addressed the pupils' skills development needs to support their confidence in using the software and hardware available. Monitoring and evaluation was carried out as part of the ongoing work of the school. Teachers keep records of pupil attainment and progress.

Further developments included the use of the interactive smartboard to support teachers in delivering skills based activities. On occasion demonstrations have been given to visiting teachers from other schools.

Good use is made of the Internet to support learning.

Aspects within this development also supported the work undertaken to address the use of computers within the maths programme.

Main point for action 3

The education authority, in consultation with the school, should consider opening Records of Needs for a small number of pupils with significant special educational needs.

The school has met this recommendation.

The head teacher, in consultation with the appropriate members of the authority, agreed criteria and procedures for opening a Record of Needs. At school level initial meetings took place with the Area Psychologist, School Psychologist and promoted staff to establish clear guidelines and procedures to be followed.

The head teacher and depute head used assessment information and documentation kept on file to identify those pupils considered to have significant special educational needs.

Appropriate procedures were followed in opening a Record of Needs for individuals.

These procedures are now firmly established within the school. A more rigorous review system has also been established for reviewing those pupils who have IEP's (Individual Education Plans) for special educational needs to ensure that their needs are being fully met.

Conclusion and Next Steps

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Overall the Main Points for Action have been successfully addressed and the school has made very good progress in the areas highlighted within the report.

The school is now well placed to continue to build on the good practice established to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their pupils in progressing appropriately through the levels of attainment.

As a result of the progress made by the school, HMIE will make no further visit in connection with the October 2001 inspection.



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