

# Thorley Hill Primary School

Park Lane, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 3NH

**Inspection dates** 11–12 October 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although there is recent evidence of improvement, the progress made by pupils in Years 3 to 6 is too slow.
- Teaching is not consistently good in Key Stage 2. Although recent initiatives have improved the quality of teaching, weaknesses remain. In particular, some work is too difficult for some pupils, too easy for others, and support staff are not used well enough.
- The checking of pupils' progress is inconsistent. The marking of pupils work does not always help them to improve.
- Teaching staff with leadership roles lack the full range of skills required to improve teaching and standards in their areas.

### The school has the following strengths

- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and pupils in Key Stage 1 make consistently good progress.
- There have been recent improvements in the quality of teaching so that pupils' rates of progress are beginning to speed up.
- Pupils are considerate and display a good sense of how to stay safe. They behave well in and around the school. Their above-average attendance reflects their enjoyment of school.
- Pupils throughout the school are developing a love of reading.
- Since the appointment of the headteacher there have been significant improvements in what the school offers and the achievement of pupils. Her clear vision and drive for improvement is shared by all staff and governors.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons taught by nine teachers. Three were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team made a number of other short visits to lessons and heard a sample of pupils read.
- Meetings were held with governors and staff. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Formal and informal discussions were held with pupils about their work, their learning and their behaviour in the school.
- Inspectors took account of the 44 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school, looked carefully at a number of documents including the school's improvement plans, data on pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring files, minutes of governing body meetings, records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding, and pupils' work in all classes.

## Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Louisy	Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- This school is an average-sized primary school.
- A local authority Specific Learning Difficulties base is located at the school: no pupils at the school attend this. It provides services to other schools off-site.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is government funding provided to schools to improve pupils' achievement. It is supplied to schools that have pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority, and pupils from services families.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupil supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which determine the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has gone through a period of change and a number of staff have been appointed since the last full inspection.
- The headteacher was appointed in January 2012.

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

- Improve pupils' achievement at Key Stage 2 through consistently good or better teaching, making sure that:
  - teachers have high expectations of pupils so that all pupils make good or better progress
  - work is at the right level for pupils of different abilities
  - information about pupils' progress is used to plan and teach well-structured lessons
  - pupils are guided to reflect on the progress they have made
  - marking is consistent and clear in showing pupils what they need to do to improve
  - teaching assistants are always used effectively.
- Strengthen the effectiveness of teachers with subject or other responsibilities by:
  - developing their roles in helping to improve the accountability of all teachers for pupils' attainment and progress
  - making sure all staff share responsibility for speeding up pupils' progress
  - ensuring that they focus their lesson observations on pupils' learning and the difference teaching is making to pupils' progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- In 2010 and 2011 pupils' achievement declined. There have been improvements over the last year, particularly in Year 6, so that standards at the end of Key Stage 2 are now above average. Some inconsistencies in teaching remain, with work not always properly pitched to match pupils' different ability levels. This results in pupils making uneven progress as they move through Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' progress is more rapid in the Early Years Foundation Stage and at Key Stage 1. When children join the school most have skills that are in line with those expected for their age. They make good progress from their starting points because of generally good teaching. Until this year, these good foundations were not built on, so that progress slowed from Year 3.
- Children's skills in linking letters and the sounds they make, and their skills in reading and writing are now secure across the school. This is because the school uses a structured approach to teaching phonics (sounds that letters make). Standards in reading are improving significantly and are above average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6.
- Across the school, there are good examples of pupils using their reading skills successfully to carry out research, using reference books and the internet. Pupils are keen to read and many do so regularly at home. These improvements in reading are in turn making a difference to the quality of pupils' writing.
- As in English, pupils' achievement in mathematics is improving in most year groups. In a lesson in Year 6, for example, pupils approached a range of challenging number problems with enthusiasm and confidence. The teacher questioned pupils well to gauge their level of understanding and the tasks were adjusted to give some pupils more practice and others move on.
- The subjects taught are linked together imaginatively to develop pupils' numeracy, reading, writing and speaking skills increasingly well. Pupils demonstrated their good knowledge and understanding of topics they had studied including the Second World War and space exploration.
- The school has put in place effective approaches such as closely targeted extra help, to support those pupils in receipt of pupil premium and those supported through school action. These pupils are now making the same progress as other pupils.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Evidence from lessons, the school's checks on pupils' progress and analysis of pupils' work shows that although improving, teaching is not yet consistently good at Key Stage 2. Teachers usually explain tasks clearly, but their expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- Pupils' progress slows in Years 3 to 5. This is because staff do not always use the information they have about what pupils understand and can do, to plan well structured lessons. Some staff are not focusing their teaching or using additional staff well enough for all pupils to reach their potential.

- Where teaching is weaker, opportunities for pupils to reflect on the progress they have made through regular, accurate and detailed feedback are too few. There are variations across the school in the use of the school's marking guidelines. Consequently, pupils are not sufficiently well-informed about how they can improve their work.
- The use of teaching assistants in lessons is not always effective to support good learning. At the start of a few lessons, teachers talk for too long to the whole class and assistants do not take the opportunity to support pupils at this time. This prevents some support staff from working with pupils to extend and develop their learning.
- There is some particularly effective teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Observations and checks on the progress that pupils make are undertaken and used to inform planning. Next steps in learning are also clearly identified, which ensures pupils make good and sometimes better progress in all aspects of their learning, including the development of new skills.
- The new systems for checking the progress that pupils make are helping to raise teachers' expectations. Teachers now know which pupils are at risk of making the progress they should. Teachers in Key Stage 2 do not use this information well enough to plan teaching and set work at the right level for all pupils.
- Good working relationships are in evidence across the school. Most lessons are characterised by effective management of pupils and good use of encouragement and praise. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is threaded successfully through everyday topics.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils are keen to learn, form good relationships and are considerate and respectful towards others. This is particularly noticeable in lessons when they listen to each other with interest. They are clear about how to treat one another, show high regard for the school and are keen to take on extra responsibilities, such as becoming a member of the school council.
  - Very few pupils need regular support to help them behave well. There is a consistent approach to managing pupils' behaviour. Pupils report that incidents of bullying rarely occur and are very confident that the school will deal with it swiftly should it arise. The school's written records confirm this and show that issues are appropriately followed up.
  - Through the careful planning of subjects that are taught they are aware of different forms of bullying such as cyber-bullying or racism. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They know who they would go to, to get help or advice, if needed.
  - There are positive relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils work together well and help each other in lessons, for example when working as learning partners. Break time and lunch time routines are well known by all pupils, who enjoy plenty of fresh air, exercise and fun.
  - Pupils have very positive views of the school, saying they feel safe and well cared for and their parents agree.
  - Pupils' attendance is above average, reflecting their enjoyment of school.
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## **The leadership and management** requires improvement

- While there have been notable recent improvements, pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching are not yet consistently good or better.
  - The newly appointed headteacher has established a strong vision, clear roles and effective systems for improving the quality of learning. Staff and governors are strongly supportive of the direction that she has set for the school. The headteacher has quickly and accurately identified what the school does well and what needs to improve. Carefully planned actions to raise standards and to close gaps in rates of progress of different groups are starting to take effect.
  - More rigorous arrangements are now in place to hold teachers to account. However, those with leadership responsibilities for particular year groups or subjects are not yet fully effective. Their monitoring of teaching has tended to focus on what the teacher is doing rather than what pupils are learning. In order to support the drive to make all teaching consistently good, there needs to be a sharper focus in their monitoring and feedback roles.
  - The headteacher has introduced rigorous systems to monitor the progress pupils make and these are increasingly effective. Staff training, supported by more robust arrangements to manage the performance of teachers, have improved the knowledge and skills of staff. As a result, there is clear evidence that teaching, and the rate at which pupils are progressing, are improving.
  - Leaders do not tolerate and quickly address any instances of discrimination. Equality of opportunity is promoted through careful checking and the effective use of funding, such as the pupil premium. Although inconsistencies in rates of progress remain, the gaps are closing.
  - Pupils are taught an appropriate range of subjects and there is a suitable emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is developed securely. The school is making better links between different subjects so that pupils understand better what they are learning and that their experiences are memorable.
  - The local authority has provided adequate advisory support.
  - **The governance of the school:**
    - Governors are increasingly holding the school to account.
    - They press the school on the reasons for any low academic performance and what should be done to bring about improvement.
    - Governors are starting to become more demanding of senior leaders and others with responsibilities to improve the school's effectiveness.
    - They ensure that all statutory duties are effectively discharged, including arrangements for safeguarding pupils.
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## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117230
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	403310

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	222
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dee Owen
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kim Perez
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 March 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 654496
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