

Thornhill Primary School

Byron Road, Southampton, SO19 6FH

Inspection dates 21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress often from low starting points.
- Most pupils make good progress in English and mathematics, including those with disabilities and special educational needs.
- Teaching is good across all years and some teaching and learning are of high quality. Teachers know pupils really well and have high expectations of what they can achieve.
- Pupils behave very well and show high levels of respect for each other and for adults. They feel very safe.
- Outstanding leadership and management throughout the school have made sure that there have been rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, achievement and behaviour.
- The governing body is highly effective in checking how the school is doing. It ensures that teachers' performance is managed robustly and is linked to the progress of pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching, whilst consistently good, is not yet outstanding.
- Progress is not quite as fast in Key Stage 1 as it is in Key Stage 2 and the standards that pupils reach at the end of Year 2 in English and mathematics remain below national averages.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, of which three were joint observations with senior leaders.
- In addition, inspectors heard pupils from Years 1 and 2 read, watched an assembly and observed break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors took account of the 13 on-line parent questionnaire responses (Parent View) and had brief discussions with parents and carers at the start of the second day. They met with some parents who asked to see them.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders and managers, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors looked at various aspects of the school’s work, including documentation about safeguarding, pupil progress, behaviour and attendance. They also looked at pupils’ books, planning and evaluation records, minutes of the meetings of the governing body and external reports.

Inspection team

Helen Howard, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Alan Jones

Additional Inspector

Mina Drever

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger-than-average-sized primary school.
- More than half the pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding, which gives additional funding to those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those in public care. This is a much higher proportion than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs who are supported by school action and those who are supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special education needs is well above average.
- Most pupils have a White British heritage.
- Nearly one third of pupils joins or leaves the school at times other than the usual entry.
- In 2012 the school met the government's floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school hosts a unit, known as The Spinney, for pupils who have special educational needs and who are on the roll of a special school. These pupils spend some of their time in Thornhill lessons.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics in Key Stage 1 by:
 - making sure that pupils use the early reading skills they are taught when they write independently
 - helping pupils to use the mathematical skills they learn when they are solving other problems.
- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by making sure that more time is planned for independent learning in each lesson.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Standards and pupils' progress are rising rapidly, especially in Key Stage 2. Most children join school with skills and abilities that are well below those expected for their age in all areas. By the end of Year 6, pupils make good, and sometimes rapid, progress to reach average standards in writing and mathematics. Their attainment in reading is above average.
- Children make good progress from their starting points in Reception and through Key Stage 1. Parents and carers comment on how well their child has settled in school. Progress is even faster in Key Stage 2. In the last two years, more pupils made expected progress in English and mathematics than nationally and a higher proportion made more than expected progress. School records show this rate of progress is continuing for the current Year 5 and Year 6.
- A high number of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual time of entry and this affects levels of attainment each year. However, very effective systems mean that the school carefully tracks each pupil's progress, including those who use alternative provision, such as temporary placement in a learning support unit or in small group sessions in school. As a result, the school can show that these pupils make good progress from when they started.
- The school is determined that every pupil has equal opportunities to succeed. More than half of the pupils are supported through extra pupil premium funding and they make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress as a result of the effective additional adult support provided.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs now make good progress because teachers plan well to meet their needs and because these pupils are very well supported by other adults. Pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties make very good progress because behaviour is skilfully managed by adults. The school has spent some extra funding on a nurture group for a small number of pupils who find school hard to manage and they make very good progress.
- Achievement is not outstanding overall because, although they make good progress in Key Stage 1, pupils' attainment remains well below average in English, including reading, and in mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers have high expectations. They plan well to make sure that all pupils, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, have work that is carefully matched to their needs.
- Teachers encourage pupils to try hard by using lots of praise and by letting them know how well they are doing. They give pupils target cards, so they can remember what they are trying to improve and check how successful they are. Pupil conferencing, where teachers set time aside in lessons to talk to pupils individually about their work, is having a strong impact on motivating them to do even better in their work.
- Teachers plan workshops (sets of small group sessions) in lessons so that pupils can get extra help together. Teachers also use them to give pupils work they can do independently, although they do not consistently plan enough time for this. Consequently, some pupils do not make such accelerated progress.
- In Reception, adults take lots of opportunities to support children's developing skills in reading, writing and numeracy. For example, children were learning to double numbers but were also encouraged to think carefully about how to form the numbers and write their answers, so that they could make progress in writing as well as in counting.
- Reading is taught well. Children gain early reading skills by learning what sound letters and combinations of letters make (phonics). Although they apply these well when they read books, they do not always use them in their own writing and so progress in writing is sometimes slower, especially in Key Stage 1. Other adults support pupils well in lessons and small group sessions

for literacy and numeracy. They are skilful in making sure that pupils work out answers for themselves.

- Pupils make good progress in learning mathematical skills, but in Key Stage 1 they do not always apply these skills to solve other problems. Consequently, pupils do not make progress at the accelerated rate seen in Key Stage 2.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. All pupils are strongly focused on how well they are doing and they try hard. The school's motto, 'Working together to be the best we can be', is seen in action across the school.
- Teachers and other adults manage behaviour very well and, as a result, pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the school. Disruption to learning is very rare because all staff follow the good procedures. Pupils who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties improve their behaviour quickly because they are so well supported. The nurture group is especially effective in helping pupils who find managing their own behaviour difficult.
- Good manners and respect are a priority for the school and pupils get on particularly well with each other. They have an excellent understanding of the different types of bullying, including homophobic bullying, and feel that bullying is extremely rare. They say that, if it does occur, it is managed very well. The school does not tolerate discrimination.
- Pupils from the special school unit regularly join in some lessons and activities. They are welcomed and settle well in class. For example, Year 3 Thornhill pupils were working with pupils from the unit to prepare for an upcoming performance to parents and they were all joining in together.
- Pupils and parents and carers say how much behaviour has improved in the last three years. Pupils feel very safe and particularly like the security cameras in school. They understand how to stay safe in and out of school. Pupils act as junior road safety officers for the school and recently won a county competition which recognised their contribution to safety.
- The school encourages pupils to manage their own behaviour and take on responsibilities. Pupils help each other to sort out arguments or problems on the playground and others act as receptionists at lunchtimes. They respond well to these opportunities and develop good skills for later life.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy school. As one pupil said as he walked in, 'I am just coming into the best school in the world.' The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now average and rising.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Inspirational leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has ensured that the school has made rapid and sustained improvements since the last inspection. They are very well supported by leaders and managers at all levels. Sustained improvements in achievement, the quality of teaching and behaviour show that they have strong capacity for further improvements.
- Leaders and managers have a 'can do' approach and accept no excuses for underperformance. This drives their expectation that all pupils can succeed, regardless of ability or circumstances. They consistently model very high standards in their own behaviour and teaching.
- The school has excellent ways to check pupils' progress and every teacher is involved in making sure that all pupils do well. Teachers adapt their lessons to help pupils catch up if they see that they are not doing as well as they should.
- Regular and careful observations of teaching by leaders and managers help teachers to improve so that teaching is at least good and improving. These observations are linked to a range of very good training opportunities that match each teacher's needs and are used to decide whether

teachers should be paid more. Teachers have also benefited from working in a partnership with otherschools and have been able to share good practice.

- The local authority has given very effective support to the school, especially in actions taken to support improvements in leadership and management and teaching. In recognition of the improvements made in the school, leaders and managers now provide training and support to other schools in the locality.
- The curriculum is rightly focused on developing skills in English and mathematics, but also gives lots of opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Work is often linked to themes for the half term and includes stories from around the world so that pupils can explore different beliefs and customs. All topics begin with something really exciting, such as a trip, so that pupils are immediately curious about what they will be doing.
- The school works very well with parents and carers and invites them in regularly. Parents and carers say that everyone is very approachable and they enjoy the family workshops led by the school. Many spoke of how teachers help them to support their child's learning at home. As one parent said, 'The school has helped my children achieve far more than I thought they could.'
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong because governors effectively hold senior leaders and managers to account and this has resulted in rapid improvements in pupils' achievement. The governors are very aware of how the school is performing and have highly effective plans for future developments. They have very good knowledge about pupils' performance and the budget. They ensure that the impact of extra pupil premium funding is successfully closing the learning gap between those pupils and the rest. Governors attend training regularly, visit the school and check that actions taken by leaders and managers are resulting in improvements. They make sure that rises in staff pay are rewarding good teaching or management. Statutory requirements are met. Governors take safeguarding very seriously and make sure that pupils are safe in school.

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

Unique reference number	132117
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	406470

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	286
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Duncan Jennings
Headteacher	Ellen Humphries
Date of previous school inspection	18–19 January 2011
Telephone number	02380 449595
Fax number	02380 40384
Email address	info@thornhillsch.net

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