

# Thorpe Acre Junior School

Alan Moss Road, Loughborough, LE11 4SQ

**Inspection dates** 20–21 February 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The work of the headteacher and senior leaders, well supported by the whole staff team, has led to considerable improvements since the previous inspection.
- Teaching has improved, thanks to leaders' thorough checks, followed up with effective staff training. Consequently, teaching has a good impact on learning.
- Pupils achieve well and standards at the end of Year 6 have risen sharply over the past three years in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good and this contributes strongly to the good learning in lessons. Pupils say they feel safe in school. They are aware of the different forms that bullying can take and how to avoid it.
- Pupils enjoy a good variety of exciting additional activities throughout the school year. These include visits, residential stays and visitors to the school.
- The school accurately evaluates how well it is doing, and leaders and managers know just what needs to be done to improve the school's effectiveness further.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet leading to outstanding achievement. Occasionally, the pace of learning in lessons is too slow. Sometimes, teachers do not vary tasks enough, and pupils are not always encouraged to develop the skill of learning independently without direction from adults.
- Systems for checking pupils' progress are too complex and the resulting data not easy to analyse. This makes it difficult for governors to monitor standards robustly.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector spent over five hours looking at learning, including observing ten lessons jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held discussions with pupils, school staff, representatives of the governing body, and a local authority officer.
- The inspector scrutinised a wide range of documents covering safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, pupils' progress and attainment, the school improvement plan, and the monitoring of teaching. She also examined the work over time in pupils' books.
- There were insufficient responses to the online Parent View website for the inspector to use this to gauge parents' views. However, the inspector considered comments from parents during the inspection, correspondence received during the inspection and the results of the most recent parents' survey carried out by the school.
- The inspector considered the responses of the 19 staff questionnaires received.

## Inspection team

Ruth McFarlane, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

# Full report

## Information about this school

- This school is smaller than average.
- Most of the pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for additional funding (the pupil premium) is above average. In this school, these are pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- More than an average proportion of pupils join the school at the later stages of Key Stage 2.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not use any alternative provision (lessons that take place regularly away from the school site).

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to enable it to make an outstanding impact on pupils' achievement by:
  - making sure that all lessons enable learning to move at a brisk pace
  - enabling pupils to develop the ability to learn without direct adult supervision
  - increasing the variety of task so that most of the lesson is spent by pupils working on a range of tasks matched to their abilities, rather than whole-class tasks.
- Streamline the thorough systems for checking and tracking pupils' progress so that governors can use the data more readily to be sure that all pupils are making good and better progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress because teaching is consistently good.
- Pupils' standards on entry to the school are usually in line with what is expected for their age, although there is a wide range and a higher proportion than usual start school with below-average skills. Pupils who join the school later than the start of Year 3 are generally below the usual level of attainment for their age, on entry. They make good progress because they are given individual attention so that they soon settle and gain confidence.
- Progress is good in all classes and all subjects. This is reflected in the school's records of pupils' progress and the good quality of learning in lessons observed during the inspection. It is confirmed by the work over time in pupils' books. Pupils in the current Year 6 have already made the progress from Year 3 that is usual for pupils by the time they leave, in six months' time. This is because pupils respond well in lessons. Excellent relationships have built pupils' confidence so that, in Year 6 in mathematics, for example, they respond accurately to harder and harder quick-fire calculations, making rapid progress.
- Attainment by the end of Year 6 has risen sharply over the past three years, from a low base, as the school recovers from a legacy of weaker teaching. Records show that progress over time for all pupils in the 2012 cohort was good, although standards attained were still within the average band. The proportion of pupils making good levels of progress was better than seen nationally, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Reading lagged a bit behind for boys. Boys are now making accelerated progress because the school is focusing on ensuring it includes plenty of activities aimed at inspiring boys' reading, such as inviting a popular boys' author into school and providing a reading club in the newly refurbished library.
- In all year groups, in lessons, the good relations that are fostered ensure a buzz of enthusiastic learning and careful attention to presentation of work. Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning and work diligently at tasks they are given.
- The most recent national test results show that the gap between the attainment of pupils supported through the pupil premium and other pupils has closed and that this group of pupils are about a term ahead of similar pupils nationally. Most of the pupils in this group, in this school, are also supported by school action or school action plus. The good support provided by class teachers, and additional support from teaching assistants and outside agencies, ensures that work is set at the right level and that these pupils make at least as much progress as their classmates. This ensures that all pupils are given equal opportunities to learn and there is no discrimination.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and all staff are determined for it to become even better. Lessons are well planned, with each lesson building carefully upon the previous one. Learning goals are shared with the pupils so they know what to aim for.
- Careful attention is given to pupils who are disabled and who have special educational needs to ensure that they make at least the same progress as others, from their different starting points.

The strong team of teaching assistants provide good support for this group and others within the class.

- In many lessons, the teacher sets a very good pace, which is maintained throughout the lesson. High expectations, constantly reinforced subject vocabulary and key facts, and a brisk change of activities, maintain pupils' interest. For instance, in a literacy lesson, Year 4 pupils discussed a dilemma and the various alternative solutions, then wrote a letter explaining what to do about it. In lessons like these, pupils show high levels of concentration and motivation, leading to sustained good progress.
- Teaching is not yet outstanding. In a few lessons, pace of learning is pedestrian and this slows progress. This happens when teachers follow the planned learning too rigidly and fail to react when pupils are ready to move on. Sometimes the planning for the week fails to take full account of the faster speed of learning that pupils are eager to achieve, and whole-class tasks are the main method used, rather than a variety to meet pupils' different needs.
- Teachers are aware of the need to allow pupils more independence in lessons and, in the best lessons, they ensure that pupils are able to make choices and to work on their own because they offer a variety of tasks well matched to ability. However, in a small number of lessons, pupils have limited opportunity to use their own initiative and rely too much on the teacher for direction.
- Marking is regular, up to date and typically gives pupils good guidance about how well they have done and how to improve their work. Excellent use is made of most resources, including information and communication technology, to motivate pupils and enhance their learning.

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

- Pupils' behaviour is typically good, both in the classroom and around the school. This is a major factor in the good progress pupils make in lessons.
- Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and they are punctual. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe. They are confident that any issues they raise will be dealt with promptly. They have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying, including that which might be encountered through internet sites.
- Pupils understand the need for healthy lifestyles and exercise. Through the school council, they demonstrate their pride in the school community and take their responsibilities very seriously. They helped devise the 'rainbow' sanctions system, which leads to loss of free time and keeps any less-than-good behaviour in check.
- Pupils particularly appreciate the educational visits and clubs at lunchtime and after school. These help develop their good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are curious about the world around them and enthusiastically embrace new experiences.
- The school manages very well the behaviour of the few who find it difficult to concentrate for any length of time, so that incidents that are entered into the records are reducing quickly.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- The senior team is well led by the headteacher. This has been a significant factor in the good improvements made since the last inspection. As a result, all aspects of pupils' education have

risen to good. Leaders have successfully identified appropriate areas for further development.

- Staff are well motivated and demonstrate a shared sense of responsibility and commitment to improving the school. They regularly take advantage of training to enhance their work.
  - The headteacher and staff know the school well due to the regular and thorough checks they carry out. Teaching has improved through regular observations, with clear feedback to staff to help them to develop and improve their practice. Teachers' performance targets focus sharply on school priorities for improvement.
  - Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is meticulously and regularly tracked, although the current system is unwieldy and the school is looking at ways to make the data more accessible for governors.
  - The school makes effective use of the pupil premium to support frequent small-group and one-to-one work. This helps to ensure that eligible pupils achieve at least as well as their classmates.
  - The subjects offered are often linked to visits, which pupils much enjoy. These include history excursions to support their work on the Victorians, and that on the Second World War. These trips provide opportunities to add to the good work in school that promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Plans are readily adapted to meet focused priorities, such as boys' reading.
  - Local authority support has been helpful to the school in guiding training for leaders and governors that has underpinned the sustained improvements now evident.
- **The governance of the school:**
- The governing body provides support and challenge that has ensured improvements. It checks that safeguarding policies and practices meet current requirements. It plays an active role in the school's self-evaluation, monitoring and improvement planning process. Governors have received training to understand the data on how well pupils do, and understand the comparative performance of the school in relation to others, but, from the data provided by the school, it is not easy for them to pinpoint what they need to know. Governors oversee the arrangements for relating teachers' pay to their performance and are beginning to scrutinise the impact of pupil premium spending. Governors know that pupils' overall education is now good, and they are ambitious for the school to improve further.

## 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>	119957
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	405896

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	120
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Hallett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jo Beaumont
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	26 May 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01509 214974
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