

# Thorns Community Infant School

Blackthorn Road, Kenilworth, CV8 2DS

**Inspection dates** 26–27 February 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Pupils achieve well. Attainment is consistently above average and pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher leads the school effectively and is well supported by the head of teaching and learning. Regular reviews of teaching support its good quality.
- The governing body maintains a good oversight of the school. Governors question and challenge the staff and keep a close eye on the pupils' progress.
- Pupils behave well and have a good appreciation of how to keep themselves safe.
- The federation of the two schools has begun well and there are good links with other schools in the area. Staff are increasing their skills through these links and are learning from one another.
- The school is a happy place. The pupils make good friends, enjoy their learning and are pleased to attend school.
- Staff take good care of the pupils and the pupils enjoy good relationships with them.
- The vast majority of parents are very happy with the education provided and would recommend the school to others.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Despite good attainment in mathematics, teachers' skills in teaching it are not yet as good as they are in English which sometimes prevents pupils of average and lower ability picking up new learning as quickly as they could.
- While the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level in reading and mathematics is well above average, not enough pupils yet reach the higher level in writing.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to develop and apply their information and communications technology (ICT) skills in lessons.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 16 lessons or parts of lessons. Four were observed jointly with either the headteacher or head of teaching and learning.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors examined the 56 responses on Parent View, the government's website for parents' views of schools.
- A telephone discussion was held with a member of the local authority's advisory staff.
- A discussion took place with a group of pupils.
- Inspectors met with some staff, including the headteacher, the head of teaching and learning and the English leader who is a member of the federated junior school staff.
- Inspectors examined progress data and other school documentation, including safeguarding information.
- A meeting took place with the three governors including the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

## Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Nicholas Cornell

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school has been part of a formal federation with a neighbouring junior school since January 2011. The two schools share a single governing body. The headteacher is the executive headteacher of the two schools. A member of staff, the head of teaching and learning, assumes responsibility when the headteacher is off-site.
- Most pupils are White British. A lower percentage of pupils than in schools nationally are from minority ethnic groups, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The school currently supports a below-average proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs at the stage known as school action. The proportion supported by school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible to be supported by the pupil premium, which is extra government funding for certain pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, is well below the national average.
- None of the school's pupils are taught elsewhere (in alternative provision).

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

- Increase the percentage of pupils who reach the higher level in writing by:
  - reviewing regularly the success of the new initiatives put in place to improve the quality of pupils' writing skills
  - ensuring that pupils are taught and use correct grammar and punctuation in their work.
- Strengthen the teaching of mathematics further by:
  - ensuring that there is an agreed approach and scheme to teach mental mathematics
  - making sure that the teaching of different aspects of mathematics is broken down into small steps so that pupils, especially the average and less able pupils, understand more easily
  - revisiting the policy which indicates which methods pupils are to use in their mathematics calculations so that there is a greater consistency in practice across the school
  - sharing the revised policy with parents so that they can help their children at home.
- Create more opportunities for pupils to use their ICT skills in lessons to increase their keyboard skills and knowledge of computers.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- When the pupils first start in the Reception classes, their attainment is often above that expected for their age. They make good progress in the Reception classes in all aspects of their development and understanding. By the end of the Reception Year, attainment is typically above the national average.
- Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. Attainment by the end of Year 2 is above average in all aspects of their learning, although a smaller proportion of the pupils reach the higher level in writing than in reading and mathematics. In 2012, just over two-fifths of the pupils reached the higher level in both mathematics and reading, much higher than national averages. In writing, the proportion was around the national average.
- Pupils do well in learning phonics (linking sounds and letters) which supports both their reading and writing. However, not enough pupils yet reach the higher level in writing because pupils until this year had not written extensively enough and insufficient emphasis had been placed on teaching grammar and punctuation. Improvements being made have still to show through in end of Year 2 results.
- Pupils' engagement in writing for different purposes is improving their skills. For example, they write reviews of the models they have made. In history, they think up medieval menus. As part of a menu, one wrote, '3rd course - Wild boar served with an apple in his mouth.' Year 2 pupils wrote a description of their visit to a Sikh temple, an occasion which contributed well to their spiritual and cultural development.
- Attainment over time shows a consistent pattern of above-average standards. In addition to their success in the basic skills, pupils show good skills in speaking and listening. In lessons, they listen attentively to their teachers and to the contributions of other pupils. They speak confidently in front of others. When they discuss ideas in pairs, they do so with enthusiasm and a good focus.
- Despite good attainment in mathematics, pupils' mental mathematics skills are not always as sharp as they might be because this is not planned well enough across the school into mathematics lessons. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their ICT skills.
- The number of pupils entitled to the pupil premium is too small to compare their attainment meaningfully with national data or other pupils in the school but these very few pupils make good progress. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar rates of progress to other pupils in the school.
- Pupils benefit well from weekly swimming lessons in the school's own pool. As a result, the vast majority can swim by the end of Year 2.

### The quality of teaching is good

- The teaching of reading is good because teachers meet the pupils' needs well through grouping the pupils by ability when they teach phonics. Additionally, reading lessons develop pupils' skills in understanding what they read. Teachers also select interesting books to study in literacy lessons, which develop pupils' interest in books.

- Teachers prepare lessons well and provide appropriate work for pupils' different needs. Teaching assistants, with good advice from the teachers, provide good support for pupils who need more help with their work so that they can enjoy success at their own level.
- Staff manage pupils well and there is mutual respect between pupils and staff. Lessons proceed smoothly and there is a good atmosphere for learning which supports the pupils' good progress. Pupils know what the lesson is to be about because the staff share their intentions for the learning with them.
- Teachers ensure that pupils work purposefully in lessons. They monitor the activities well and so quickly become aware of any difficulties which the pupils may meet. They provide more demanding tasks if they notice that pupils finish quickly.
- Teachers make good use of ICT to introduce lessons. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher introduced new mathematics work by projecting onto a screen the images of cubes she was using to work out fractional parts. This helped the pupils to understand and to sustain their concentration. In the activities that followed, all pupils had enough cubes to carry out their calculations, indicating the good use that is made of learning resources.
- Teachers mark the pupils' work well, giving praise for what has been done well and usually including an aspect for improvement. They also set targets at regular intervals for pupils to aim for in English and mathematics. However, they do not always remind the pupils to think about their targets before they begin activities in lessons.
- In the main, teachers show more confidence in teaching English than they do in mathematics. Teaching in mathematics is not always broken down into small enough steps to secure the pupils' full understanding, especially for pupils who are of average ability or those who find learning more difficult.
- Staff do not ensure that pupils get enough opportunities to use computers in lessons; for example, to develop word-processing skills in writing, and to develop pupils' keyboard skills and their general knowledge about computers. Exceptionally, computers were used well in a phonics session with less able pupils, where pupils were looking for particular sound blends on individual computers.

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

- Pupils enjoy school and their attendance is above average.
- Pupils show good attitudes to their learning. Pupils are polite and they get along well together.
- Behaviour is typically good. There is no evidence of bullying. There have been no exclusions and no racist incidents. Pupils behave well in class, around the school and at playtimes but, occasionally, individual pupils distract others in assembly. Parents agree that behaviour is good.
- Pupils feel very safe in school and say, 'School is a good place to be.' They feel confident that they can approach the staff if they have any worries. They understand road safety and know the 'Green Cross Code'. They appreciate that they should wear helmets when riding bicycles, 'In case you fall off and bang your head.' Pupils know that they must be wary of strangers and not talk to them.

- Pupils know the simple school rules and make class rules so that the days run smoothly. They volunteer for duties, such as putting out the benches for pupils to sit on in assemblies. They carry out these duties well.

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

- The school is well led and there is a good partnership between the headteacher and head of teaching and learning. The federation of the two schools is developing well and staff are increasingly learning from one another. Staff indicate that they enjoy working at the school. As one wrote, 'I love working at Thorns: great atmosphere, everyone works together.'
- The federation improvement plan sets out the correct priorities for the infant school and is based on accurate school self-evaluation. Actions for different priorities are clear and the way that the success of different priorities is to be measured is very apparent.
- Good arrangements are made for the review of the performance of all members of staff. The headteacher examines all the draft reviews, which have been written by delegated staff, to ensure that there is a consistency in quality across the school.
- The range of subjects taught is well planned, and there are good links between subjects. Good attention is paid to the creative aspects and pupils' personal development as well as basic skills. The good range of different after-school activities during the school year provides pupils with plenty of opportunities to extend and develop their interests. Opportunities for physical education are enhanced by the swimming pool.
- There is not enough attention to mental mathematics and the school does not have a plan of the mental skills to be taught. The school recognises that the mathematics calculation policy needs updating because it is not being applied consistently. It also understands that parents need to be provided with a copy of this when complete so that they can help their children at home.
- Good opportunities are provided for pupils to make visits to places of interest. Reception children visited a farm park during the inspection. Visitors talk to the pupils about things related to their studies. In the 'Going Green' theme, a university lecturer brought in a racing car made from recycled materials and which runs on chocolate.
- The school receives only a small amount of pupil premium funding. This is spent on extra resources, including more teaching time for staff so that small teaching groups can be arranged. It also supports eligible pupils to take part in activities that they might otherwise miss.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school. It provides conferences to update headteachers, which benefit the school. Governors, too, have attended specific training courses.
- Parents are very supportive of the school and volunteer parents help, for example on school trips and with supervision arrangements for swimming. The vast majority express very positive views of the school.
- The school has very good links with other local schools. Through these, they plan joint training. Staff who teach the same age group and with a similar subject responsibility meet to exchange information and ideas.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet the current regulatory requirements. Staff undertake regular training so that they are kept updated.
  
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is well led and fulfils its statutory duties effectively. It has a good range of expertise which is used well in the committees which carry out detailed background work in preparation for main governing body meetings. Governors take responsibility for different aspects of the federation improvement plan and visit the school to follow up progress on the different initiatives. These visits, together with joint reviews with staff of work and lessons, give them a good insight into the quality of teaching and the school's progress. Expertise among the governing body to understand data, together with the range of other expertise, ensures that there is a good level of challenge and questioning about the school's work and pupils' progress. Governors know that the pupil premium money is very limited but are knowledgeable about how it is spent. They understand the arrangements for teachers' reviews of performance but accept that the budget presently provides little room to reward good performance. Governors are involved in the review of the headteacher's performance.

## 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>	125550
<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	402815

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	180
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Patrick Arben
<b>Headteacher</b>	Elizabeth Bradbury
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01926 853875
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