

Thundridge Church of England Primary School

Ermine Street, Thundridge, Ware, SG12 0SY

Inspection dates 7–8 March 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' attainment over time is good. In most years, results are above average in English and mathematics.
- Pupils make good progress across the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Progress is good for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs as well as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- Teaching is consistently good, with some that is outstanding.
- The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident, kind to each other, and extremely respectful. They are highly involved with their learning.
- The headteacher and governors lead the school well and have ensured that both teaching and achievement are improving.
- Pupils have a good understanding of other societies and cultures.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although teaching is consistently good, it is not yet outstanding in Key Stage 2. Teachers do not consistently give pupils enough guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Teachers in Key Stage 2 do not use the interactive whiteboards effectively enough in mathematics to extend the learning of older pupils, particularly the more able.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, of which six were jointly seen with the headteacher. In addition, the inspection team made four shorter visits to lessons to focus on specific aspects.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and visited two assemblies.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, the headteacher, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 38 responses to Ofsted's Parent View online questionnaire. Members of the inspection team also spoke to parents and carers while they were bringing their children to school.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including school improvement plans, data on pupils' current progress, pupils' written work, the governing body minutes and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Janev Mehmet-Christofides, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all of the pupils are White British.
- A very low proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, the extra funding provided by the government to support children in care, those who are eligible for free school meals and children from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher leads the school and also teaches. The four teachers in the school are also responsible for leading subjects.
- The school has recently acquired a Quality Mark from the local authority for the Early Years and Foundation Stage.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards in Key Stage 2 by giving more-able pupils harder work to do in mathematics so that more pupils reach their full potential.

- Improve the quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 from good to outstanding by ensuring that teachers:
 - provide more guidance to pupils during lessons so that they know how to improve their work
 - use the interactive whiteboards more regularly and effectively to stimulate pupils' interest in their learning and their participation in lessons, particularly in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the school with skills and understanding that are broadly in line with what is expected for their age but there is a wide range; some are below expectations. From their different starting points, all pupils go on to make good progress by the time they leave.
- Pupils attain standards in both English and mathematics that are above average at both key stages. In 2012, results at the end of Year 6 were average overall, but they were distorted in this small school by the special circumstances relating to pupil illness. Work in pupils' books and as observed by the inspector in lessons confirms that pupils currently in the school are on track to reach above-average standards by the time they leave.
- Results in the 2012 national screening for Year 1 pupils were above average. Pupils are taught letters and the sounds they make (phonics), systematically and successfully. They take advantage of a wide range of opportunities for celebrating literacy. For example, on World Book day, pupils dressed up as book characters and were able to talk about the stories they were from.
- Most pupils' control of basic punctuation and grammar is sound and more-able pupils write confidently, imaginatively and at length. In one class, for example, pupils wrote about an imaginary monster as part of a whole-school writing exercise which reinforced their skills in using descriptive language.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, pupils sometimes make exceptional progress as a result of excellent teaching. Well-resourced play areas with a range of physical and sensory activities stimulate the children's understanding of their environment. Attainment in Key Stage 1 is high. In 2012, the pupils were the equivalent of more than two terms ahead of pupils nationally in the Year 2 assessments.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress as a result of accurate identification of their needs and effective support provided by all staff.
- The pupil premium funding is used successfully to support a small group of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals by providing extra teaching staff to support their progress and raise their attainment. These pupils are making accelerated progress in both English and mathematics and have caught up with their peers; their attainment is now in line with that of other pupils in the school.
- Some particularly good work was seen in a mixed Year 1 and Year 2 mathematics lesson, where pupils were estimating and measuring objects in different ways, accurately and with confidence. However, in a Key Stage 2 lesson, the work given to more-able pupils did not extend their mathematics skills sufficiently.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is good overall across the school, with some outstanding teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. All teachers have clear expectations for pupils and learning intentions are communicated at the start of every lesson. Work is always planned so that all pupils are provided with tasks appropriate to their ability.

- Teachers know what levels all pupils are working at, and plan their teaching activities accordingly to motivate pupils and, generally, provide work that is hard enough to make them think. In all classes, pupils are provided with the opportunity to check the work of their peers. Even as early as the Reception class, children are set the task of marking each other's literacy work. This lays a strong foundation for independent learning skills.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. Teachers use teaching assistants effectively to support both these and other pupils. For example, in Year 1, during guided reading activities, all staff were equally skilled in using questioning techniques to develop the pupils' learning.
- Subjects such as science are frequently taught in a very inspirational way, which makes learning memorable for pupils. For example, during the topic 'Light and Dark', a classroom was set up especially so it was darker, and pupils could use a torch on a number of different objects to measure their reflection.
- Teachers use information and communication technology in a creative way, particularly in the lower part of the school. The mixed Year 1 and Year 2 class, for example, were able to sequence a story accurately because of the task set by the teacher using the interactive whiteboard. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 confidently use laptops to research key topics for literacy activities. At times, however, teachers miss opportunities to use the interactive whiteboards to stimulate pupils' imagination or engagement in the lesson sufficiently. This is especially the case in mathematics.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and marking in pupils' books is of a consistently high quality across all classes. Teachers make good use of opportunities in class to give pupils guidance about how to improve in the lower part of the school but this is not as effective in upper part of Key Stage 2.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of all pupils in the school is exemplary. They are polite, considerate and have very good relationships with each other and their teachers.
- The attendance rate is above the national average and pupils are punctual to school and to their lessons. They take part with great enthusiasm in a range of extra-curricular activities and excursions organised by the school.
- Pupils are extremely positive about their learning. They say their lessons are fun, and that the marking in their books in green and red pen tells them how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their learning.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and treat each other with respect. They know how to apply principles of e-safety when using computers in school and at home. Pupils know how to keep healthy and enjoy their school meals. Bullying is very rare.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and conscientiously apply for positions of responsibility, such as buddies for younger pupils and monitors for work around the school. Pupils take turns to look after the school office at lunchtime. The school council regularly sets up events to raise money for their school or pupils in other countries. Pupils' confidence and organisational skills are marked, and this prepares them exceptionally well for the next stage of their lives.
- Parents praise the school and are very happy that their children are safe and making progress.

Parents and carers receive high levels of support to enable them to understand how well their children are learning and how best to support their children at home. Regular workshops on a number of educational topics are popular and well supported by parents.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is ambitious for the school and has brought clear improvements to teaching and achievement. She provides a good role model for all staff through her own high-quality teaching, good use of training and interaction with pupils. She works collaboratively with teachers, pupils, parents and carers to secure the best experiences for everyone who attends the school.
- All staff share the headteacher's commitment to ensuring that pupils have positive experiences in the classroom. Processes for monitoring, tracking and developing all staff are rigorous and consistent. Everyone has high expectations for the best learning experiences for all pupils. All these factors show the school's strong capacity to continue to improve and further raise attainment.
- The pupil premium is used effectively so that it directly addresses known areas of pupil need, particularly in literacy and numeracy. As a result, eligible pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Subjects are very well planned and organised so that pupils have lots of opportunities to practise their skills, such as in calculation, investigation and communication. Teachers responsible for coordinating topics ensure that there are exciting activities for pupils to learn about. Regular topics for discussion are sent home so that children can practise talking about them with their families. This is then followed up by a whole-school writing activity every two weeks. Consequently, pupils have developed good literacy skills.
- Teachers support pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development well. Pupils learn about all major religions, cultures, and how to develop themselves to achieve their potential. They learn French, as well as organise charity events to raise money for children in overseas. As a result, they reflect on and empathise with other cultures.
- In assemblies, pupils are praised publicly for their excellent work and behaviour. They write their own prayers and take turns to read them out on a daily basis. Equal opportunities are embedded in school life because pupils and staff are given the support they need to improve. The school is sensitive to disability. As a result, pupils are tolerant and supportive of any child who has a severe physical condition.
- The local authority has provided a range of support for the school, such as a variety of training, joint reviews and specific developmental work for mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body ensures that the headteacher carries out her responsibilities to improve teaching and raise achievement effectively. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body have an excellent understanding of the strengths of the school and any areas that need more work. Governors visit the school regularly and carry out 'learning walks' and school reviews so that they know how well teachers are doing. They take part in whole-school training as well as specialised training provided for them by the local authority. They support the headteacher as well as challenging her positively in regular meetings. They understand how to use data in order to see how well the school is performing relative to other schools. Governors ensure that teachers are only rewarded through promotion if their pupils make

good progress. They also make sure that pupil premium funding is allocated for the best interests of the pupils concerned and check to make sure it is having the desired effect. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements fully meet the current regulatory requirements.

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	117408
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	403319

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Clare Millhouse
Headteacher	Paula Greatrex
Date of previous school inspection	15 January 2008
Telephone number	01920 462642
Fax number	N/A
Email address	head@thundridge.herts.sch.uk

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