

Thurlow Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Little Thurlow, Haverhill, CB9 7HY

Inspection dates 2–3 May 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		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher's determined leadership has led to rapid improvements. She has focussed sharply and effectively on improving teaching and learning.
- Attainment varies from year to year because year groups are very small. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on course to reach above average attainment in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is good and there are examples of outstanding teaching. Lessons are planned carefully and meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils enjoy their learning. They behave well, stay safe and are courteous to adults and each other.
- Middle leaders use assessment information effectively to adapt teaching and accelerate pupil progress.
- The Governing Body monitors the school development plan very well and works closely with the headteacher to secure further improvements.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make as much progress in mathematics as in English.
- Pupils do not have the opportunity to use their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- There is not outstanding teaching in every class. Teachers do not consistently make clear to pupils at the start of the lesson, or through their marking, what they need to do for their work to be really good, particularly in mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven lessons, including four joint observations with the headteacher.
- She held meetings with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of five members of the governing body, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector considered 18 responses to the online 'Parent View' survey and spoke to parents at the end of the school day to gather their views about the school. She also considered 9 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at pupils' books with the headteacher.
- She listened to pupils read in Year 1 and Year 6, and observed the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- The inspector looked at a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation, school improvement plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of visits from the local authority, safeguarding and behaviour files, data on pupils' current progress, information on the management of teachers' performance and the monitoring of teaching.

Inspection team

Emily Simpson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a smaller-than-average primary school. Pupils are taught in four classes.
- A small minority of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A very small minority of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is broadly average, while the proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement is below average.
- A below average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding to be used for children in local authority care, pupils with a parent in the armed forces and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress, in 2012. This was the first time the school had Year 6 pupils.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress, especially in mathematics by:
 - making sure pupils are clear about exactly what they are learning in lessons and how they will be successful
 - making sure that teachers' marking makes clear to pupils how they can improve their work and that pupils are given time to make these improvements
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply mathematical problem solving skills in other subjects
- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by sharing the outstanding practice that now exists in the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage with skills broadly expected for their age. They make good progress through the Reception Year and leave with skills above those expected for their age.
- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly average by the end of Year 2. Attainment was low for the school's first Year 6 cohort in 2012. The quick implementation of effective improvement plans by the new headteacher means that almost all pupils have made good and accelerated progress during the past two terms.
- Pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach above expected standards in English and mathematics in the 2013 national tests. The number predicted to gain Level 6 in mathematics is well above expected levels. Generally, however, progress in mathematics, though good, is not as rapid as it is in English because pupils do not have regular opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects.
- In the Year 1 screening test for phonics (the sounds that letters make) pupils' scores were below the national average. A new approach to teaching phonics has been introduced and pupils in Year 1 are on track to attain above the national average.
- Pupils' progress is monitored rigorously, so any gaps in learning are quickly identified and help and guidance provided to get them back on track. Pupils in most year groups are now learning at a faster rate throughout the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because of the good support they receive both in lessons. They are encouraged to be independent in their learning, and progress information shows that they do as well in school as their classmates.
- There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who otherwise qualify for this support to comment on their attainment without identifying them. However, the school has spent this funding sensibly to purchase additional teaching hours to support small group work and programmes to accelerate progress in English, and the impact is already evident; pupils in this group are making faster than expected progress in both English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Most teaching is good and there is now significant outstanding teaching in Years 1 and 2 and Years 5 and 6. Teaching has improved because there has been an emphasis on giving staff the right training to become more effective. Lessons are now carefully planned to challenge pupils' thinking and encourage greater independence in their learning.
- Teaching in Early Years Foundation Stage is beginning to link areas of learning with child interest, for example, children were going on a crocodile hunt in the outdoor area which had been carefully planned after the children showed interest in crocodiles the previous day. The teacher plans work carefully to ensure children of different abilities are challenged in their learning.

- In the best lessons teachers are skilled at moving learning forward at a brisk rate and are quick to identify if a pupil is struggling. Appropriate support is immediately put in place to enable the pupil to progress.
- In an outstanding Year 5 and Year 6 mathematics lesson, the teacher skilfully used lesson time to make sure the more able mathematicians were challenged in their thinking in an investigative activity whilst the rest of the class practiced multiplication skills in small groups. Once the more able group were working she then led the class in interpreting complex line graphs. The pupils were clearly used to this level of challenge and independent work showing the lesson to be typical.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled and their questioning and support for pupils is excellent. They encourage pupils to work independently and not become over reliant on their support.
- Relationships are excellent between teachers and pupils in lessons. This means pupils are comfortable when asking for help and are keen to work hard in lessons.
- In some lessons teachers do not make completely clear to pupils what they are learning and what they must do to be successful in their learning. This slows pupil progress in these lessons.
- In English teachers' marking is clear and usually gives pupils guidance and suggestions for improvement. However there is not always time provided for pupils to make improvements. In mathematics marking is not as clear and 'next steps' are rarely identified.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning as they nearly always concentrate and do their best. This together with their good behaviour and punctuality to lessons has significant impact on their learning, enabling them to make good progress in lessons.
- Pupils are safe in school and use resources and equipment carefully. They have excellent facilities to use on the playground and all pupils play sensibly and safely together.
- Behaviour around the school is good, pupils move quietly and safely from their classrooms to assembly or the lunch hall. They have good relationships with each other and are polite to adults and visitors. School records show this is typical of day-to-day behaviour.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying means and how it is different to falling out with your friends. They say bullying is very rare in school and are confident that adults would deal with the issue. Older pupils understand how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Attendance is average. School attendance records show it improved in the spring term to above average levels.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has quickly and accurately identified the schools' priorities for development. Together with senior teachers she has drawn up robust improvement plans to
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address them. These plans are monitored every six weeks alongside pupil progress data and teachers' own targets. This accurate planning and rigorous monitoring has enabled the school to make rapid improvements in the quality of teaching and pupil progress.

- School self-evaluation is detailed and shows the improvements that have been made. Judgements are evaluative and based on clear evidence. Observations of teaching conducted by the headteacher are accurate and feedback is succinctly focussed to bring about improvements. Records kept since September clearly document improvements in teaching.
 - The headteacher has created a clear balance between supporting staff and holding them to account. Individually tailored support, training and development is provided to all staff members, including those on temporary contracts, as the headteacher is motivated by the conviction that all pupils in the school should be taught well at all times. Systems introduced to manage teachers' performance work effectively. Staff value this support and know their views are valued in turn. Positive responses to the staff questionnaire show morale is high.
 - Subject leaders check the quality of teaching in their subjects together with work in pupil books and pupil assessments. This is used to set areas for development for individual teachers and the school. Recent monitoring shows marking is not as well developed in mathematics than English.
 - All safeguarding requirements are met and training is provided for all staff and governors.
 - Leaders and managers carefully check the progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium and disabled pupils or those with special educational needs. The special educational needs coordinator checks the effectiveness of interventions and is swift to change these if they are not helping pupils catch up the gaps in their learning.
 - The local authority has provided good support to the school and has carefully monitored improvements in teaching and achievement.
 - Teaching programmes have been changed this year and now follow a thematic approach so that natural links between subjects can be exploited to hold pupils' interest and reinforce their understanding. This approach is enjoyed by pupils, although they feel they would like more educational visits. It also contributes pupils' developing spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is strong. All members of the governing body have taken the opportunity to attend training so they are now able to offer both support and challenge of the school. Governors know how well the school is performing compared to other schools nationally. All governors are responsible for monitoring one key area of the school development plan together with a member of school staff, which ensures governors have a hands-on approach to school improvement. Governors know where teaching is strong and what is done to reward good teachers and tackle underperformance. They check pupil premium funding is spent wisely and know how it impacts the learning of this group of pupils. They oversee the school's use of its finances carefully.
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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

Unique reference number	124698
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	412896

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Becca Woodburn
Headteacher	Vicky Hogg
Date of previous school inspection	25 November 2008
Telephone number	01440 783281
Fax number	01440 783864
Email address	admin@thurlowschool.co.uk

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