

# Thorndon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Thorndon, Eye, IP23 7JR

**Inspection dates** 4–5 June 2013

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although pupils' progress has improved this year, standards are no higher than broadly average across the school because of slow progress in previous years.
- Despite some strengths and recent improvements in the quality of teaching, it still varies too much to promote good achievement overall.
- Children of Reception age do not always have enough opportunities to develop their skills through practical experiences.
- Not all subject leaders have developed the skills they need to check teaching and pupils' progress in the areas they are responsible for.
- Pupils' progress is now rigorously checked, but in the past the information collected about their progress and attainment was not always accurate.
- Governors visit the school regularly and are extremely supportive, but their visits are not always tightly focused on how well the school is improving pupils' progress and attainment.

### The school has the following strengths

- Most pupils are currently making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching has improved since January, and teaching and learning in Years 5 and 6 are consistently strong.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school. They feel safe and older pupils routinely help to look after younger ones.
- The headteacher has a good understanding of how the school needs to improve. Changes made since January have already improved progress and started to raise standards.
- The school's close links with the church, parents and local groups make it a strong part of the community.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is particularly good and underpins all the school does.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed nine lessons or parts of lessons, all of which were seen together with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, a group of pupils, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with parents and carers.
- The inspector took account of 18 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), the school's own parental questionnaires, six completed staff questionnaires and individual communications from parents.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at: information from the school's checks on its performance; its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress; school improvement plans; leaders' records of classroom observations; safeguarding arrangements; and records of governing body meetings.
- She also looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on pupils' attendance.

## Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium, which is additional funding for certain groups, is below average. In this school it currently applies only to pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, and at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- The proportion of pupils who leave or join the school during Key Stages 1 and 2 is above average.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2013, as did the school bursar and the teacher of the Reception and Key Stage 1 class. Subject leaders also took on new roles of responsibility at this time.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

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

- Make teaching consistently good or better by ensuring that:
  - work in lessons is always matched closely to pupils' abilities
  - pupils in the Reception class have more opportunities for practical learning
  - all teachers' marking in books gives pupils clear guidance on how to improve their work, and they are routinely given the opportunity to respond.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - equipping all subject leaders with the skills they need to analyse pupils' progress and identify areas for improvement in their areas of responsibility
  - ensuring that governors rigorously check how well the school is doing through visits that are tightly focused on school improvement priorities, and are always reported to the rest of the governing body.

## Inspection judgements

### **The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because over recent years pupils have not made the progress they were capable of.
- Children typically join the school with the skills expected for their age. They make progress in their first year but this is not always as rapid as it could be. Reception children sometimes spend time working more formally with Key Stage 1 pupils rather than actively exploring learning at their own level.
- Standards at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 have fluctuated from year to year since the last inspection. They were broadly average in 2012 but had been below average in previous years. This year progress is much better and standards are improving.
- The results of the national screening check on how well pupils know the sounds that letters make (phonics) in Year 1 last year were below average. Phonics are being taught more effectively this year, and so pupils in Key Stage 1 are now able to use these skills to read unfamiliar words. Older pupils who do not find reading easy do not have the same skills to help them, so they misread some words and the text does not always make sense.
- The school's assessments of how well pupils progress have not always been accurate. Since January, the school has ensured that all pupils' progress is checked regularly and accurately. The resulting data show that although they still have ground to make up in terms of standards, all groups of pupils are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The very small number of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium are making good progress. The funding is used to enable them to be taught and supported in small groups or individually, as necessary. It has also been used to train staff in providing appropriate opportunities for pupils who have very specific needs. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment in English and mathematics without identifying them.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are well supported. Their needs are quickly identified and help and guidance are provided to ensure they make good progress. The headteacher checks the progress of these pupils regularly to make sure support continues to be effective.

### **The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because in some lessons work is not matched closely enough to pupils' needs and abilities. For example, Reception children sometimes join in activities with Year 1 and 2 pupils that are too advanced for them, rather than developing the skills they need through practical experiences.
- Occasionally, pupils are organised in groups which are too large. This means that the work set is too easy or too hard for some of the pupils. On other occasions, all pupils start with similar work and more-able pupils are only given harder work later, rather than then starting the lesson with work at the right level.
- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly. Marking in Year 3 and 4 is good and gives pupils clear

guidance as to how they can improve their work. They are given the opportunity to respond and this is helping them to make better progress than in the past. Other teachers are beginning to adopt the same method of marking but this is not yet consistent across all year groups.

- Where teaching is strong, instructions are given clearly and concisely. This means that pupils understand their task but do not sit for too long listening to the teacher. For example, in Years 5 and 6, the teacher used individual pupils' work and ideas to remind the class of her high expectations for biographical writing about William Shakespeare. They were soon working hard to improve their own writing. Short stops during the lesson enabled the teacher to both encourage good work and give further reminders to any pupils who needed them.
- The headteacher has a good knowledge of how to identify and support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Well-briefed adults support them in the classroom and in small groups. The school ensures that these pupils also receive support from their class teachers, giving other pupils opportunities to work with additional adults in the classroom. This helps pupils to develop independent learning skills rather than relying on a particular adult.
- In all lessons, teachers and other adults create a safe and secure environment for the pupils. They consistently show care and consideration, modelling appropriate behaviour, and pupils respond well. For example, the boys in Reception were building a 'ten green bottle' wall and finding it a little difficult to cooperate. With adult guidance, they were soon sharing the jobs and working together very well.

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

- Pupils behave well and show consideration for each other. Older pupils readily play with younger ones at playtime. They see themselves as role models, and during the inspection lunchtime helpers could be heard praising younger pupils for good behaviour.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and talk about physical, emotional and cyber bullying. They are adamant that it hardly ever happens in school. They are clear about the difference between bullying and 'falling out' and say that if there are any problems, teachers always sort them out.
- Older pupils play a role in helping others to stay safe. For example, the Year 6 road safety officers promote safety on the road, and the e-safety officers gave a presentation to both pupils and parents about safety when using the internet.
- Pupils who join from other schools say that they enjoy being at this school and were made very welcome when they arrived. Parents who spoke to the inspector were also very pleased with the way their children settled into the school, and said they were very happy.
- In lessons, pupils work well in groups and respond to the teachers' consistently high expectations of good behaviour. Even when pupils lose concentration if the work in lessons is occasionally too easy or too hard for them, they do not disrupt the learning of their classmates.

### **The leadership and management requires improvement**

- The headteacher has brought a wealth of new ideas to the school which are already making a difference to pupils' progress and attainment. Pupils' progress is checked frequently so that anyone in danger of falling behind is quickly identified and helped to catch up. The headteacher is currently the key person responsible for this because other subject leaders have not yet had the opportunity to fully develop their leadership skills.

- As a result of improved teaching, all groups of pupils have made good progress this year. A new system has been introduced to judge teachers' performance against how much progress their pupils make and how well they fulfil their different roles in the school. The individual targets set for teachers will be used to measure whether pay rises or promotion are justified by the results achieved.
- Changes to the way lessons are taught are helping to raise standards because they are now exciting and engaging. One boy said, 'I like forest school because it gives you a sense of freedom at school.' The introduction of forest school and different topics means that pupils have more opportunities to develop their literacy, numeracy and communication skills across a range of subjects.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination through ensuring that all pupils are listened to, and all are fully involved in activities regardless of ability or need. Despite some slower progress in the past, no group of pupils are currently underachieving.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is particularly good. The school has strong links with the local church and uses it regularly for collective worship. Equally strong links with different community groups help pupils to develop their social skills as they take part in events both in school and in the village.
- The local authority has provided good support for the school. At the request of the governing body, it conducted a review of how well the school was doing in November 2012 and has given good support to the headteacher, as she was new to the role.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governors now have a very clear picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Following the review in November they have developed more effective systems for checking progress and, while still being very supportive, are starting to hold the headteacher and senior leaders effectively to account for school improvements. Governors visit the school regularly and help out in many different ways, but their visits are not always focused on pupils' learning and how this can be improved, and are not routinely reported to the rest of the governing body. Governors are very clear about how the pupil premium is spent. They maintain a balance between supporting pupils' academic progress through individual and small group help and financial support so that all pupils can take part in activities such as residential visits. Governors check the quality of teaching through reports from the headteacher and also the progress data for different classes which are now regularly presented to them. They make sure that national requirements for safeguarding and child protection are fully met.

## 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>	124745
<b>Local authority</b>	Suffolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	411885

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	58
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Wendy Coulson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Tamsin Little
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 November 2009
<b>Telephone number</b>	01379 678392
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