

Thrapston Primary School

Market Road, Thrapston, Kettering, NN14 4JU

Inspection dates 25–26 September 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.

- Given their individual starting points when they join the school, most pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Good leadership from senior leaders, and the governing body, results from an accurate assessment of the school's effectiveness and a clear focus on improving pupils' progress.
- The school's drive for improvement includes regular reviews of its work, ensuring a reflective approach and successful teamwork.
- Most teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding; this helps lay the foundations for lifelong learning right from the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- There is a strong underlying emphasis on pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This results in their outstanding behaviour, and understanding of being safe.
- The school is well regarded by its families because it focuses well on the pupils' personal as well as their academic development.
- This is a school which sees the potential in its pupils. Adults and pupils show high levels of respect for each other. Their working relationships are a strength of the school.
- Pupils cooperate very well together, both at work and at play. They are polite and most considerate towards each other.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not enough teaching is yet outstanding, particularly in the ways it ensures consistent challenge for the most-able pupils.
- Some teachers do not always use their information about pupils' progress to plan work for all groups of pupils.
- The skilled questions teachers ask individuals and small groups of pupils to extend their learning are not yet a consistently routine feature in whole classes in all lessons.
- Pupils' standards in mathematics across the school are not as high as they are in English.
- Pupils are not given a wide enough range of opportunities to use their mathematical skills for a variety of purposes in different subjects.
- There is insufficient scope for the Early Years Foundation Stage staff and Year 1 teachers to work together on planning for the continuity of pupils' learning across these stages of education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 31 lessons involving 20 teachers and their teaching assistants. Four of these lessons were shared with members of the school’s senior leadership team. Daily registrations were observed and inspectors attended an assembly. In addition, inspectors undertook shorter observations around the school to observe its life and pupils at work.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils selected at random by the lead inspector. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with pupils. Inspectors heard a sample of pupils from Years 2 and 4 read.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents including development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, various monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, information provided for families, and governing body documents. The school’s data and assessment records for the tracking of the pupils’ progress were scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, class teachers, the special educational needs coordinator, administrative staff, and members of the governing body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- The 74 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into consideration. Inspectors spoke personally with parents during the inspection.
- As the school had very recently completed a survey of staff which was identical to the voluntary survey requested by Ofsted, the results of the school’s own questionnaire were submitted to inspectors, and were taken into account by the inspection team.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Hermione Horn	Additional Inspector
Amanda King	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most of the pupils come from White British backgrounds. There are very few pupils from other heritage groups or who speak English as an additional language.
- Most of the pupils continue their education at the school from the Early Years Foundation Stage until they leave at the end of Year 4.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs 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.
- Most pupils receiving additional support have speech, language and communication needs and/or experience behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Others experience a range of difficulties including: specific learning difficulty; moderate learning difficulty; physical disability; autistic spectrum disorder.
- The headteacher is secretary of the local group of schools, the East Northamptonshire cluster of 13 upper, middle and primary schools.
- The governing body manages a daily breakfast club for pupils, from 8.00 to 8.45.
- In April 2013, the Governing Body established an after-school club, the 'Owls'. This operates from 15.00 to 18.00hrs every school day and provides care for children from Reception to Year 4. This facility is pending voluntary registration and will be inspected separately by Ofsted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure the momentum for improving teaching and pupils' achievement is maintained across all year groups by:
 - extending the good questioning skills teachers already use with small groups and individual pupils to whole-class situations
 - ensuring that all teachers use the helpful data collected about pupils' attainment and progress to plan and set work that is matched specifically to pupils' different abilities
 - challenging more consistently the most-able pupils through different learning activities and alternative starting points for them in lessons
 - providing increased opportunities for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 teachers to work together to enhance the improving progress being made by children by the end of the Reception Year.
- Raise pupils' attainment in mathematics across the school, and improve their progress by:
 - helping pupils to feel more confident in their mathematical ability through extending the opportunities for them to use and apply their mathematics skills across a wider range of subjects, and through situations which relate directly to their everyday lives
 - ensuring the best practice in the teaching of mathematics is extended across the whole school, particularly in the development of pupils' mental mathematical abilities.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Typically, children enter the school, either in the Nursery or Reception years, with levels of attainment and development broadly similar to those expected for their age. Pupils make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave at the end of Year 4. Most pupils transfer to the partner middle school with levels of attainment above those typical for their age.
- The school is becoming increasingly successful in helping pupils to read. In the Year 1 phonics screening check, the proportion of pupils gaining and exceeding the expected marks is higher than average. The proportion gaining the highest marks is broadly similar to that found nationally. The school is currently increasing successfully the challenge offered to its most-able pupils throughout all lessons and learning.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making increasingly rapid progress. This is feeding successfully into Years 1 and 2. School data show that, by July 2013, the majority of Year 2 pupils were making better progress than that achieved by most pupils nationally. This proportion increases steadily during Years 3 and 4 so that, by the end of Year 4, the large majority of pupils are making, at least, good progress. Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning also contribute very positively to their achievement and progress; learning is serious fun.
- Over the past two academic years in particular, the proportion of pupils who are disabled, those who have special educational needs and the very few for whom English is an additional language have made increasingly good progress, given their individual starting points. This success is because of the specialised help they receive from both teaching and support staff. Such effective action exemplifies the ways the school demonstrates, in practice, its strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.
- School data show that the progress of those pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium funding is accelerating. In 2012 it was similar to that of other pupils. By summer 2013, due to intensified and well-targeted individual support, the attainment gap had closed significantly, and the majority of pupils were attaining nationally expected levels in both English and mathematics, a marked advance from 2012.
- In this school, the additional funding is used well to raise the attainment and accelerate the progress of those supported by the pupil premium. By the end of Year 2, most such pupils made a year's better progress overall than others in reading and writing. During Years 3 and 4, they made a good term's better progress in their English work. In mathematics, they made around a term and a half's better progress by both Years 2 and 4.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in their literacy work because there is a marked emphasis, from the Early Years Foundation Stage, on the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics), and a strong focus on the development of children's speaking and listening skills. There is a constant dialogue between adults and children in the Nursery and Reception classes. This stands them in good stead throughout Years 1 to 4 and aids well the pupils' confidence in communicating with others.
- Pupils throughout the school are supported well in their literacy work and enjoy reading. They are aided in this by the school's excellent library facilities and resources. Pupils' familiarity with and love of books is helped by the regular access they are given to fiction and non-fiction libraries by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not quite as strong as in their English work. The school is

closing this gap by helping pupils to feel more confident in their mathematical ability through broadening the opportunities they have to use and apply their mathematical skills. This action forms an important part of the school's improvement and development planning, but practice has not yet gone far enough.

- Pupils also achieve well in sport and physical education. Additional funding for this is already being used well by the school to maintain the 2012 Olympic heritage; three Team GB Olympians have visited the school in the past year. Discussions with pupils show they enjoy joining in, going to competitions and 'winning things'. They are clear that participation in sport leads them to become fit.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is consistently good across the school. Teaching and non-teaching staff provide admirable role models for the pupils. Consequently, effective working relationships follow and help to underpin pupils' excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils see their teachers and their assistants as a strength of the school. One pupil, among others, said, 'The teachers make us all feel special.'
- The school has worked hard to develop its increasingly effective systems for tracking and assessing its children's and pupils' attainment, progress and development. It works closely with other schools and education partners to ensure that teachers' assessments are accurate. However, the use of assessment information to plan learning in lessons to meet the pupils' individual needs is not always consistently effective across the school. The school is acting to improve the situation, but the impact of its actions have not yet been realised fully in ensuring that extra element of challenge for all groups of pupils.
- The expertise of the Early Years Foundation Stage staff in the teaching of phonics is shared effectively with Key Stage 1 staff. The good practice established by Year 2, is being extended, successfully, into Years 3 and 4, and such sharing of good practice is common among staff. However, good practice in teaching is less well facilitated or coordinated between Reception and Year 1 to enable more pupils, including the most able, to make outstanding progress.
- Teachers are working to ensure the best practice in the teaching of mathematics is extended across the whole school, particularly in the development of pupils' mental mathematical abilities. However, there is insufficient emphasis on the teaching of mathematical skills linked to 'real life' situations where the pupils can apply their skills.
- The ability of pupils of all ages to explore creatively is strengthened by the ways staff use the school's outdoor environment, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Planning for the use of the school's grounds not only enhances learning but is also effective in encouraging pupils' interaction with each other, and their social and spiritual development.
- Most teachers use questioning regularly and effectively, particularly with individuals and small groups of pupils. This good practice is not only used well to check pupils' understanding but also to challenge them to explain their thinking and ideas and develop well their investigative skills. However, at times, some teachers forget to use their questioning skills in whole-class situations.
- There is much outstanding teaching and learning in the school. For example, in a Year 4 history lesson introducing Aztec pictorial writing, there were high levels of challenge for all groups of pupils in becoming investigative historians in interpreting the symbols used in early forms of writing. This work not only extended the pupils' understanding of the importance of writing as a means of communication, but also their understanding of the importance of communicating

clearly. Their work also made a major contribution to their spiritual development in the ways they showed respect for each other's point of view concerning the meaning of the symbols.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Families recognise the school as a very friendly community within which pupils can work and play in safety and confidence. All parents and carers responding to the Parent View online questionnaire thought that their children are happy at the school. Punctuality to school is very good and there are no exclusions. Attendance has risen year on year, but remains average due to normal childhood illnesses.
- Pupils understand very well how to keep each other safe. They take on responsibility readily and show a well-developed awareness of the implications, dangers and consequences of the different types of bullying.
- An important strength of the school is its welcoming and supportive environment. Parents told inspectors how much they appreciated the ways the school balanced their children's academic and personal development.
- Behaviour and safety are outstanding because pupils develop self-confidence, trust the staff, and are enabled to develop very well both their independence and social skills. Almost all pupils show persistence and concentration when learning.
- The foundations for pupils' excellent attitudes to learning are laid securely from the Early Years Foundation Stage by the positive atmosphere for learning which is created by staff. There is a sensitive approach to behaviour management to which pupils respond very quickly. Incidents of any inappropriate behaviour in any year group are very rare.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptionally well developed by the school. This was exemplified in the way Years 1 to 4 sang, with feeling, the 'School Rule' song, during a Key Stage 1 and 2 music lesson: 'This is an important matter/ How we behave at school/ We can get along much better/ When we can obey the rules.' It was evident they take this message to heart.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, at all levels, have shown they can make a difference to pupils' lives, and the steady improvements in pupils' achievement and progress, particularly over the past two years, reflect this. The headteacher has worked particularly well with the staff to ensure self-evaluation is honest, accurate and designed to help the school move from good to outstanding. Consequently, there is good teamwork among staff and the school is showing secure capacity to improve.
- There is effective leadership right from the start of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The good practice seen in the Nursery and Reception classes is providing a firm foundation for pupils' attainment and progress in future year groups. Across the school, teachers have developed a good range of subjects and topics which make pupils' learning interesting. Learning is further enhanced by a programme of extra-curricular activities which broadens pupils' experiences well.
- All parents spoken with during the inspection and almost all responding to Parent View confirm that the school offers very good care and support for their children. Since April 2013, the school has enhanced this provision through its after-school club. The governing body is in the process of voluntarily registering this club to extend its work with pupils aged under five years. During the

inspection, this provision was found to be well organised and managed.

- Shared lesson observations show that senior leaders evaluate very accurately the quality of teaching. They monitor lessons and learning regularly, and are increasingly successful in advising subject coordinators and other leaders on developing their management skills, and in coaching staff in improving their professional skills. As a result of this approach, staff are open to the sharing of good practice and discussing ideas.
- The willingness of staff to extend their skills through additional training is exemplified through the range of sport-related and coaching courses attended. The school has, for example, robust plans for the further development of the already good teaching of sport.
- The school agrees that there are well-established links with its local authority. These are benefiting the school well, including through its work to ensure its assessments of pupils are accurate, and in more general support for school development and improvement planning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about the school's performance. It utilises well the personal and professional expertise of individual governors to both support and challenge the school. Governors are able to compare and contrast the school's performance with others nationally. There is a clear understanding of how and why pupils make progress.
 - There are systematic checks on the effectiveness of teaching. Teachers' performance management targets are linked closely both to school improvement priorities and teachers' requests for professional development. Records show that teachers are only promoted if they are applying national teaching standards and their pupils are making good progress.
 - The governing body knows how the pupil premium funding is allocated and produces a statement showing how it is spent. This is being used well not only on additional staffing to provide individual tuition but also to give pupils the essential specialist resources to support their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology work.
 - Together with the headteacher and other senior leaders, the governing body ensures procedures and policies for safeguarding pupils are in place.

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	122111
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	429589

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adam Boon
Headteacher	Nick Hearn
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
Telephone number	01832 732512
Fax number	01832 732275
Email address	reception@thrapston.northants-ecl.gov.uk

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