

Thorney Close Primary School

Torquay Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 4BB

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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 of all abilities achieve well. Their attainment has risen rapidly since the previous inspection to reach the national average in both Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils in the multi-sensory unit make equally good progress from their starting points. Sometimes their progress is outstanding, because of the high quality teaching and support they receive.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress in early reading and writing skills and their knowledge of number.
- Teaching is good, with a sizeable proportion that is outstanding. Teachers plan exciting and novel activities to motivate pupils to work hard and learn well.
- Teaching assistants are well trained to give good support in lessons. This ensures that all pupils learn at the same rate.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour make this a very warm and welcoming school, where all are able to do their best. Excellent pastoral care ensures that pupils feel safe and secure. Parents agree their children are cared for very well.
- The headteacher has provided excellent leadership to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. Her clear view of how good the school can be and her determination are wholeheartedly supported by staff and governors. Teamwork in the school is excellent.
- The school's commitment to and practices in supporting equal opportunities for all pupils are outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching and learning are not yet consistently outstanding in all classes.
- Recently appointed middle leaders, currently lack the training and experience to discharge their responsibilities as well as they might.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 23 lessons, including several jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, four members of the governing body, including the Chair and vice-chair, a representative of the local authority and groups of children from Year 6, Year 3 and the multi-sensory unit.
- Inspectors listened to groups of pupils reading from Years 2 and 6.
- A range of documents was scrutinised, including the school data on pupils' progress, the school development plan, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance and information relating to the school's safeguarding procedures.
- There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) to register parental views. In light of this, inspectors took account of the school's most recent parent questionnaire (July 2013). They also took account of 27 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Moira Fitzpatrick, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Claire Brown	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thorney Close is an average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is high. Pupil Premium is additional government funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children of service families or children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action is average; the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school makes additional provision for pupils with multi-sensory impairment. These pupils have hearing or visual impairment.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, including the work of teaching assistants, so that there is a higher proportion of teaching and learning that is outstanding, and thereby improve pupils' achievement further by:
 - making regular use of existing outstanding practice so that staff learn from each other
 - developing the monitoring and evaluation skills of recently appointed middle leaders so they are able to manage these improvements successfully
 - training recently appointed middle leaders to capture and share the most effective teaching methods, especially in promoting literacy and numeracy skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children join Nursery with skills that are well below those expected for their age. During their time here and in Reception they make good progress, especially in their basic skills of literacy and numeracy. By the end of the Reception year, the majority are ready for learning in Year 1.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been maintained at the national average in reading, writing and mathematics for the past three years. Results in the Year 1 phonics assessment, which measures how well children know the sounds that letters make, were well above the national average in 2012 and this year's results were equally high.
- The progress of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is accelerating rapidly in reading, writing and mathematics because of improvements to systems for tracking pupils' progress regularly, and taking swift action to tackle any slowing down of progress. The attainment of Year 6 pupils who left the school in 2012 was at the national average in all subjects, representing good progress from these pupils' individual starting points. Pupils did particularly well in writing. This level of performance has been repeated this year, with further improvements to pupils' performance in writing and mathematics. In this year's unvalidated test results the proportion of pupils making expected progress rose to 100% in writing and mathematics, with 96% making expected progress in reading. However, the most-able pupils did not all reach the higher levels in these tests and the school is tracking these pupils more closely in each year group, as a priority for this year.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs have their progress monitored very closely. Skilled staff provide support that is well targeted to help them to make the same good progress as their peers. In national tests in recent years, these pupils have achieved better than their peers nationally, both in their attainment and the progress they make.
- Pupils in the multi-sensory provision, who have hearing or visual impairment, receive expert and dedicated support which is carefully tailored to their individual needs. One-to-one support and effective skills teaching, develop good levels of confidence and a determination to succeed for these pupils. From their individual starting points, they make good and sometimes, outstanding progress, so that they are able to spend the majority of their time in lessons with their friends.
- The achievement of the high proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is accelerating as teaching has improved. The gap between their performance, including that of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, and that of other pupils is closing rapidly and currently is a little over one term in their learning. Their progress is better than their peers in this school and nationally and some of these pupils make outstanding progress from their individual starting points.
- High quality, effective phonics teaching is laying strong foundations for pupils' rapidly improving reading skills. Reading is well promoted across the school through regular reading in class, reading competitions and a range of activities that help pupils to develop an enjoyment of reading. As a consequence, pupils are increasingly fluent in their reading as they move through the school.
- Pupils' writing skills have developed extremely well. Presentation and effective use of expressive language were notable strengths seen in books during inspection. Music is another notable strength in the school. Pupils' singing is of a very high order and clearly gives pupils a great deal of pleasure.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort in lessons. They know their pupils well and plan interesting and challenging activities that quickly engage them in learning. This ensures that pupils develop good levels of independence, work quickly and enjoy their learning.
- Pupils work very hard to please their teachers because they know they will find success in what

they do. For example, pupils in Year 6 made excellent progress in their work on fractions, because the tasks were well pitched, so pupils quickly became absorbed and sustained concentration extremely well.

- The assessment of pupils' learning, including high quality marking and tips to improve, is very well managed; this information is well used to promote good progress. This leads to detailed lesson planning which takes account of the wide range of needs in classes in nearly all classes.
- Teachers use effective strategies to assess pupils' progress and respond quickly to errors and misunderstandings. They are also skilled at noticing where pupils need extra challenge to accelerate their progress. In a Year 4 mathematics lesson, the use of pupil 'experts' to quickly help individuals who were 'stuck' showed how a little help made a big difference to progress.
- Children in Nursery and Reception make good progress because the varied activities and good pace to the teacher-led learning ensure that children are well engaged. Their independence develops well. For example, a group of children organised their own version of Little Miss Muffet through role play.
- Teaching for pupils with hearing or visual impairment is extremely well planned to meet their individual learning needs. Two Year 6 pupils made exceptional progress in their grouping of numbers when working on Venn diagrams, because of the teacher's careful observation of how well they understood each new step.
- Teaching assistants are well trained so they effectively support and track pupils' learning. They ensure that tasks are understood and give good encouragement to pupils while ensuring that they complete tasks independently. Occasionally, as with some teachers, they display better skills in teaching and supporting in one subject over another, which the school is keen to capture for the benefit of all.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are kind and considerate to each other, and very welcoming to visitors. Teachers' high expectations and good behaviour management strategies have helped pupils to develop very positive attitudes to learning. Pupils know they are expected to keep going and support each other, and have learned that overcoming difficulties present no problems when they do this.
- Pupils manage their own behaviour very well so that, out of the classroom and in the playground, behaviour is exemplary, even with minimum adult supervision.
- Pupils, and their parents, have absolute confidence in staff to look after them. They say they feel safe in school and trust adults to solve any problems that may arise. They have been taught to understand the difference between bullying and outbursts of unkind behaviour. Older pupils say that bullying is rare and that teachers take any incident very seriously and 'sort it out'.
- Pupils are taught well to assess risks and keep themselves safe. They understand the dangers of the internet and social communication sites. They know how to stay safe in and out of school, including on the many exciting trips out of school.
- Pastoral care and support for pupils and their families is outstanding. Pupils are well known to adults, who are themselves alert to any changes in pupils' mood or behaviour. Staff response is immediate and sensitive, so that the high proportion of pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable are exceptionally well cared for and they know that they are valued
- Attendance is average and shows a steady improvement since the previous inspection.

The leadership and management are good

- Excellent leadership of teaching by the headteacher, and rigorous systems to check pupils' progress, have led to a rapid rise in pupils' achievement since the previous inspection. Leadership, including governance, is ambitious and determined in its drive to improve the school further. Staff morale is high and there is a clear commitment to achieving outstanding school status.

- Recently appointed subject leaders have good subject knowledge and astute plans for further improving pupils' English and mathematical skills. The headteacher rightly has plans for leadership training for these staff so that they become more skilled in checking on the work of colleagues, with the aim of improving the quality of teaching to achieve consistency in the quality of learning and support in all classes.
- Teachers' performance is effectively managed through systems which link measureable targets to pupils' progress, other school priorities and salary progression.
- The curriculum is well planned to provide frequent opportunities for pupils in all stages to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. For example, lovely examples of well written descriptions, observations and explanations were seen in religious education, science and topic books.
- The school's outstanding commitment to equal opportunities is reflected in the way that the curriculum is successfully adapted to meet the vast range of individual needs in the school. Sport is extremely well promoted with compulsory lunchtime clubs for all pupils. The additional Primary School Sport funding contributes to this and to the many after-school sports clubs that large numbers of pupils enjoy.
- Pupil premium funding is very well used to support learning for the large group of pupils at whom it is targeted. It is well used to enhance their learning by giving them access to the many school trips and provide any necessary resources for learning. The appointment of a pupil premium leader, whose role is to champion the achievement of these pupils, underlines the school's commitment to getting the best for all pupils.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements; record keeping is exemplary.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and are especially pleased with the weekly newsletter, 'The Thorney Times,' to which all staff contribute.
- The local authority has provided good support to improve the quality of leadership and teaching since the previous inspection.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very well involved in the work of the school and they bring a good range of expertise and experience to its service. They use their good understanding of comparative data to become well informed about the school's performance. They use this good knowledge to hold the school to account for the achievement of all pupils. Governors know how the school's appraisal system links the quality of teaching to pupils' achievement and teachers' salary progression. They manage finances well and hold the school to account for its use of additional pupil premium and the Primary School Sport funding.

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	108828
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	425788

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Short
Headteacher	Catherine Jones
Date of previous school inspection	22 February 2012
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