

Thurlbear Church of England Primary School

Thurlbear, Taunton, TA3 5BW

Inspection dates 27–28 November 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		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher has been highly effective in leading changes that have resulted in rapid improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement since her appointment. She is strongly supported by other senior leaders and a knowledgeable and challenging governing body.
- Attainment for pupils is above national levels in Year 6, with an increasing number of pupils working at the higher Level 5.
- All pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, with an increasing number of pupils making outstanding progress.
- Pupils are very happy at school. Warm and trusting relationships underpin their enjoyment of learning.
- All teaching is good, with an increasing proportion that is outstanding. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are particularly well taught and supported so that they make excellent progress in their learning and personal development.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary, both in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel extremely safe in school and are nurtured well.
- Staff, parents and carers and pupils share a strong belief in the values of their school.
- The school provides pupils with an interesting range of subjects, topics and experiences which contribute strongly to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Everyone is included and respected.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The proportion of outstanding teaching is not yet high enough to ensure all pupils' progress is rapid and sustained across all year groups in mathematics.
- Just occasionally in lessons, work is too hard or too easy for some pupils so that learning is not moved on rapidly.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons involving eight teachers and two assemblies; three lessons were observed jointly with school leaders.
- The inspectors held discussions with school leaders, staff and governors and had telephone conversations with a representative of the local authority and the school improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the systems for tracking pupils’ progress, the arrangements for safeguarding pupils and samples of pupils’ work. They heard groups of pupils reading and spoke with others about behaviour and safety arrangements at the school.
- Account was taken of the 41 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the views expressed by those parents and carers who spoke with inspectors at the start of the school day or wrote letters. Consideration was also given to the 22 responses from staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Michael Bartleman, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Fiona Robinson

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils come from a White British background.
- Around one pupil in ten is disabled or has special educational needs supported through school action. This is below average. Around one pupil in 50 is supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, which is well below average.
- Around one in 25 pupils is supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for free school meals), which is below average.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is made up of one full-time Reception class.
- The governing body manages a before- and after-school club daily known as 'The Den'.
- There have been many staff changes since the previous inspection. The headteacher was appointed in January 2012; the assistant-headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 coordinator were appointed in September 2012.
- The headteacher is a Local Leader of Education and supports two schools in the local area.
- 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?

- Make more teaching outstanding so all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in mathematics by ensuring that:
 - teachers always match activities in lessons to pupils' different abilities so learning moves at a rapid pace
 - activities develop older pupils' confidence and independence so that they are able to complete all tasks successfully.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with skills below those typical for their age, particularly in communication and language and number. They are well taught with many children now making outstanding progress from their starting points. Children build good relationships with each other, the adults around them and the older children. The 2013 school data show that the vast majority of children are above expected levels for their age when they start Year 1.
- By the time the pupils leave at the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics is above average, and an increasing number of pupils attain the higher Level 5.
- More able pupils make particularly good progress in writing in the school because challenging work extends the pupils well. Evidence from book scrutiny, lesson observation during the inspection and the school's own data show that an increasing number of pupils in all year groups are making excellent progress to reach above the levels expected for their age. Gaps between groups are closing rapidly.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and the few pupils supported by the pupil premium make accelerated progress due to highly focused one-to-one and group sessions. The numbers of pupils supported by the pupil premium are too small to make comparisons with others about their attainment in English and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is good overall but is not consistently as strong as in reading and writing in Years 4, 5 and 6 where a few pupils do not have the confidence or independence to solve calculations successfully.
- The school has worked effectively to improve the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) by using teachers and teaching assistants to run daily small-group sessions. Results in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2013 were above average.
- Attainment in reading is above expected levels in Year 2 and in Year 6. Pupils have good opportunities to read for a variety of purposes in lessons and enjoy reading a wide range of books.
- Pupils appreciate the new teaching arrangements for physical education funded by the government. The school has used the funding to arrange for specialist teaching, training and to increase participation in after-school sports which the headteacher has plans to monitor regularly.

The quality of teaching is good

- Lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and the school's monitoring data confirm that the overall quality of teaching is good. An increasing proportion of teaching is outstanding.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium receive well-managed help which enables them to progress as well as their classmates. The focus on individual needs also ensures that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are supported effectively.
- The teaching of reading and writing has improved rapidly since the headteacher's appointment and the changes she has initiated. Staff training, including highly effective coaching by the assistant headteacher, has generated greater consistency in teaching standards, which is now consistently good. Teachers create opportunities to write in many different contexts, which develop pupils' interests and stamina for writing well. Expectations of pupils' behaviour and standards of work are high.
- In the outstanding lessons, teachers plan tasks that rapidly build on previous work and what the pupils are already able to do. Teachers and teaching assistants question pupils effectively, securing good understanding. Good links are made with other subjects and learning moves at a rapid pace for all pupils. This was seen in the Year 6 class where pupils contrasted non-fiction texts. The practical activity ensured that pupils had excellent opportunities to discuss and share

their ideas with each other, before writing.

- Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. The team of adults work together very well. The children are encouraged to become independent, both through teacher-led activities and those they choose for themselves in the vibrant, well-organised classroom.
- Occasionally, work in mathematics does not demand enough of pupils at differing ability levels. Pupils' progress is not as rapid in these lessons when they are given work that is too easy or too hard.
- Scrutiny of work in books shows that teachers give pupils exceedingly helpful encouragement about where they have succeeded, as well as feedback about what they need to do next. Pupils appreciate being able to talk with their teachers about their learning and are keen to improve their work.
- Reading is taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants successfully promote the pupils' knowledge and use of the sounds that letters make. They provide interesting opportunities for pupils to read, both for enjoyment and to find information to support their topic work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Behaviour is exemplary. This is reinforced by warm and trusting relationships between pupils and staff. There is a strong and explicit emphasis on teamwork in the school and pupils respond to this very positively. Pupils have a great pride in their school and they respond well to rewards and 'golden tickets'.
- Pupils show interest, enjoyment and have a great desire to learn which contributes greatly to their good and better achievement.
- Parents and carers have great confidence in the care that the school provides and pupils agree that they feel happy and safe in school. A parent described Thurlbear as 'a family friendly school with the pupils at the heart of everything that is done'. Virtually all parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, spoke to inspectors or wrote letters judged behaviour to be excellent.
- Discussions with pupils showed they understand about different types of bullying, including cyber bullying. They said that, although squabbles may sometimes arise, there is no bullying in school. Pupils have immense trust in the headteacher and all staff.
- Through a well-planned range of activities, pupils are helped to develop strategies so that they are able to manage everyday risks for themselves, such as those associated with the internet, personal safety and roads.
- Pupils play an active role in ensuring a happy, well-organised school. The pupil's 'Task Force', house captains and monitors make a strong contribution to the running of the school. These opportunities have an extremely positive impact on their personal development.
- The school has excellent working relationships with a number of outside agencies to support pupils and their families whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Attendance has improved and is now above the national average.
- Pupils and parents and carers greatly appreciate the well-run early morning breakfast club, which provides a calm and sociable start to the school day, and the after-school club.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Improvements since the headteacher's appointment have been rapid and are being sustained. Her strong leadership and drive have improved the quality of teaching and pupils' attainment quickly. She has managed the pace of change very effectively and created a tightly knit, harmonious community, where morale is high.
- Since their appointment other leaders have supported the headteacher very well. Leaders in charge of subjects and key stages are effective in checking the quality of teaching, tracking progress and supporting colleagues.
- Highly constructive monitoring of teaching and an effective programme of training have ensured

that all teaching is good with an increasing proportion which is outstanding. Leaders make effective use of data to identify pupils who are in danger of falling behind. This information is used well to provide additional support to help pupils accelerate their progress. The headteacher's and assistant headteacher's uncompromising drive has ensured that standards are rising to well above national levels.

- The headteacher manages the performance of teachers very effectively, with clear links between the rewards that teachers receive and pupils' good progress. Teachers are set clear targets linked to pupils' progress, thus promoting good or better teaching successfully. The rigorous systems introduced by the headteacher ensure that there is consistency of expectation across the school and teachers are regularly held to account for the performance of their pupils.
- The headteacher's and governing body's accurate self-evaluation and record of improvements show that leaders have a strong capacity for further improvement. The school improvement plan is focused clearly on gaining and sustaining outstanding achievement throughout the school. Members of the governing body frequently visit the school to check on how the improvement plan is being implemented.
- The leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are outstanding. Transition from pre-school settings is well planned and children quickly settle in to the vibrant learning environment. Excellent links are developed with parents and carers.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination well, and this is reflected in the good achievement of all groups of pupils. There are no recorded incidents of harassment.
- The headteacher has focused successfully on improving literacy and developing links with parents and carers. Home activities and pupil blogs extend pupils' learning well and develop strong involvement from parents and carers. Pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics have improved considerably as evidenced by the results in national tests in 2013, and are set to improve further next year.
- Curriculum topics bring together different subjects in a way that the pupils describe as 'interesting and fun'. The range of subjects and activities contributes very strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lessons are enriched extremely well through a wide range of after-school activities and by opportunities for pupils to learn a foreign language, to play instruments and to sing. Visits, including residential visits and visits to a partner school in France, and opportunities to develop sporting and artistic skills add further enhancement.
- The local authority and the school improvement partner provide 'light touch' support for school leaders and governors which has helped them to evaluate the school's performance. The school works effectively with sixth formers in the local area for teachers' training and for checking the accuracy of assessments.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a clear knowledge of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to keep improving. It provides effective support and challenge. The governing body is very clear on the targets for the school and how these can be met. Governors have a good understanding of the school including the management of teachers' performance and the implementation of Teachers' Standards and how they affect salary progression. Governors monitor spending carefully and are aware of how the school is using the pupil premium to improve pupils' achievement. The range of expertise within the governing body enables close monitoring of, for example, the financial position of the school. Governors make sure they are kept up to date with training to improve their effectiveness, especially when holding the headteacher to account. The governing body fulfils statutory duties, such as ensuring the school meets safeguarding 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	123849
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	426936

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vic Freir
Headteacher	Heather Barraclough
Date of previous school inspection	19–20 November 2008
Telephone number	01823 442277
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Email address	office@thurlbear.somerset.sch.uk

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