

Thornton Primary School

Thornton Road, Thornton, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD13 3NN

Inspection dates 26–27 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Despite improvements in pupils' attainment and progress, some pupils, particularly boys, do not achieve well.
- Pupils do not achieve as well in writing as they do in reading and mathematics.
- Some pupils do not make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and this limits their achievement in writing.
- There is not enough consistently good or better quality teaching to enable all pupils to make good progress relative to their starting points.
- Staffing instability in a few classes has slowed pupils' progress.
- Teaching does not always promote good behaviour for learning and positive pupil attitudes.
- Effective marking and written guidance for pupils on how to improve their work and the use of targets to accelerate their progress are not consistently well embedded across the school.
- The contribution of middle leaders to driving school improvement is underdeveloped.
- The management of teachers' performance and appraisal are not being used well enough to drive further improvement in teaching.
- The school's leaders have not been successful in securing the confidence of parents and carers in all aspects of its work.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels at Key Stage 1 in reading and mathematics has increased.
- Achievement in mathematics at Key Stage 2 has improved.
- Pupils are generally well behaved around school and show respect to their peers and adults.
- Effective action by the acting senior leaders and the consultant headteacher in combination with valuable external support has led to rapid improvement in teaching and achievement.
- The governing body has been robust in challenging leaders about the school's disappointing performance in 2013. Very recently, their decisive action has contributed to rapid improvement.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 16 part-lessons across Key Stage 1 and 2 and made several visits to the Early Years Foundation Stage classes.
- Meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team, the consultant headteacher, a group of staff, a group of middle leaders, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke informally with a number of parents and took into account the 74 responses to Onsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also considered the 35 staff questionnaires that were completed.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils, listened to a group of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils read and talked informally with pupils at social times including in the dining area at lunchtime.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including data relating to pupils’ current attainment and progress, evidence from the school’s evaluation of its work, minutes of meetings of the governing body and information about attendance, behaviour and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Katrina Gueli, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Robert Pye

Additional Inspector

Jonathan Brown

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thornton is larger than the average-sized primary school. The number on roll is increasing each year due to a phased expansion.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals and those looked after by the local authority) is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2013 which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- A few pupils are educated in an alternative provision. The school currently uses Horizons and Longview.
- A local leader of education (LLE), the headteacher of Princeville Primary School, Bradford and colleagues in that school have been contributing to the school's external support package.
- The headteacher has been absent due to ill health since late January 2014. He will leave the school at the end of the summer term. A consultant headteacher has been supporting the school since February half term. She has been appointed to the post of headteacher from September 2014. In a few classes, the teacher has been absent long-term.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better so all pupils achieve well in all subjects, especially boys in writing by:
 - extending opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills
 - ensuring teachers insist on pupils' high-quality responses to their questions
 - challenging pupils to develop their vocabulary and the use of more complex sentences
 - focusing on improving pupils' handwriting and insisting on good presentation in all subjects
 - ensuring that the curriculum in all years provides pupils with a stimulating and engaging context for learning, especially writing
 - improving planning for learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure all activities are purposeful and promote good progress
 - improving the quality and consistency of marking and written feedback across the school.
- Improve leadership and management so that the pace of recent improvement can be sustained by:
 - ensuring all middle leaders are making a strong contribution to driving school improvement
 - sharpening the analysis of data to pinpoint whether action to narrow gaps in performance is swift and effective
 - improving the extent to which performance management, appraisal and salary progression are used to support school improvement
 - promoting the confidence of parents more extensively.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- For pupils currently in Year 6 the school's assessment data, work in pupils' books and observations of learning in lessons confirm that pupils are making at least expected progress. However, their progress over time is limited owing to past underachievement. In writing, Year 6 boys are doing less well than girls.
- In all other year groups it is a more positive picture. School data and work in pupils' books show gaps are being successfully closed between the performance of boys and girls reflecting the school's strong focus on promoting equality of opportunity. The achievement of all groups of pupils, including minority ethnic pupils, is on an improving trend. Most pupils in Years 1 to 5 are making the progress expected and an increasing number are making better than expected progress.
- Pupils' achievement in writing lags behind that of other subjects, largely due to the performance of boys. Strategies, such as choosing the context for writing carefully to better motivate and interest boys have had a positive impact, but speaking and listening skills are not being sufficiently well developed as pupils move through the school. This is reflected in pupils' responses to questions and the quality of their writing.
- Higher expectations for pupils' progress and increased challenge for the most able have resulted in more pupils reaching the higher levels in the moderated 2014 Key Stage 1 tests and assessments. School data show the proportion of pupils assessed as reaching Level 5 or above at the end of Key Stage 2 has also risen in reading and mathematics.
- The achievement of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage requires improvement. Children enter with the skills typical for their age and, by the end of the Reception Year their performance is broadly in line with national expectations so they are suitably prepared for Key Stage 1. Children do not achieve well in the Early Years Foundation Stage overall because opportunities for them to learn and find things out for themselves are not as well planned in the Reception classes as they are in the nursery.
- During Key Stage 1, pupils make the progress expected of them and their attainment is in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of the key stage.
- The progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to that of other pupils in the school. In 2013, the attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was around one third of a term behind others in the school in reading, writing and mathematics as starting points were slightly lower. Current data show the progress of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has improved at a similar rate to their peers.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are effectively supported in and out of lessons. Most are making the progress expected of them and some are making good progress.
- The small number of pupils educated off-site are achieving as well as other pupils in the school because their needs are being suitably met.
- Pupils enjoy books and reading. They are confident in using a range of strategies to tackle difficult words. Reading at home is less well promoted than reading in school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has not been strong enough to enable pupils to make good progress relative to their starting points. Variation in teaching quality between classes as pupils move through the school, including in the Nursery and Reception classes, has led to uneven progress and achievement that requires improvement.
- The local authority review in June 2013 highlighted significant weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics. Effective in-school action and external support have led to marked improvements in mathematics teaching and this is reflected in better progress and attainment for pupils currently in the school.

- Improvements in the teaching of writing have been more modest. Teaching, including questioning, does not always encourage pupils to extend their vocabulary or incorporate more complex sentences in their writing so the quality of their written work is not improving quickly enough. There is too little emphasis on developing pupils' handwriting.
- Expectations for the presentation of pupils' work in all subjects are not consistently high.
- Teachers are taking more account of what pupils know and can do to inform their planning and, as a result, there is a much sharper focus on ensuring activities are effectively matched to the needs of different groups in the class than at the time of the last inspection. This is providing all groups of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, with the challenge needed to secure expected and better than expected progress over time.
- The assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding is robust, enabling gaps or misconceptions to be identified and addressed effectively.
- The introduction of targets for pupils so they know what to do to improve is contributing to better progress. For example, in a Year 5 English lesson, pupils were challenged to use their writing target and one of the 'higher risk' learning objectives to produce sentences relating to an animated film clip they had watched. The added element of competition led to all pupils being highly motivated with many, including boys, 'desperate' to share their writing to demonstrate success.
- The quality of marking and written feedback is variable across the school. In some books, there is evidence of very effective dialogue involving teachers' comments and pupils' responses that is moving learning on well. In others, guidance on how to improve is less clear or questions posed gain no pupil response so the impact on pupils' learning is limited.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Most pupils behave well and show courtesy and respect to others. However, school records show there are more than a few incidents where individuals do not behave well. Some pupils do not listen well when others are speaking.
- A small minority of parents who completed the online questionnaire 'Parent View' raised concerns about how well behaviour was managed in the school. Inspectors found that incidents were dealt with effectively and pupils confirmed that any inappropriate behaviour, including bullying, was taken seriously by the school's leaders and dealt with effectively.
- The majority of pupils are well-motivated and keen to learn. They are eager to contribute to class discussions or be involved in group tasks. In the Year 6 mathematics lessons visited, most pupils persevered well to complete challenging algebraic problems, discussing approaches and working collaboratively to 'crack the code'. In a few classes, where there has been discontinuity of staffing or where teaching is not as successful in capturing pupils' interests, pupils' attitudes towards learning are less positive.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils know what constitutes an unsafe situation and the action they should take to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet. Most parents who responded to 'Parent View' were confident that the school their child is well looked-after and kept safe.
- Pupils have clear understanding of right and wrong. They have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, racism and homophobia. Pupils commented, and school records confirm, that incidents of bullying are becoming less frequent.
- The importance of good attendance has been promoted effectively and non-attendance has been followed up more rigorously. As a result, attendance has improved from below to above the national average.
- The school works extensively with outside agencies to effectively support pupils who are most vulnerable to underachievement.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and consultant headteacher have worked well with those providing external support, including the local authority, to bring about notable improvements in teaching and pupils' achievement.
- During the inspection, leaders demonstrated a very accurate picture of the school's performance, based on a wide range of evidence. This knowledge is ensuring leaders' actions are well targeted with subsequent monitoring to check they have the impact intended. However, much improvement is quite recent so has not resulted in good teaching over time or good pupil achievement. Nevertheless, accurate self-evaluation and effective action to secure better progress in mathematics and higher attainment for the most able confirm the capacity of leaders to bring about the improvement needed.
- Actions to tackle weaknesses in teaching have been robust and effective in most cases. Professional development opportunities for staff including visiting other schools, coaching and whole-school training have helped many teachers to improve their practice. Leaders have taken appropriate action to minimise the impact of staff absence and been resolute in their determination to recruit only those with the potential to be high-quality teachers or leaders.
- Extensive work 'in-house' and with partner schools has ensured teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment is accurate; this accuracy has been confirmed during the external moderation of assessments at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 for writing. Data are being used more effectively to track pupils' progress and there is a clear focus on checking how well different groups are achieving, including those eligible for support through the pupil premium. However, data are not routinely analysed and compared to previous performance to confirm whether gaps in attainment or progress between different groups are closing rapidly enough.
- Teachers are being held to account more effectively for the progress of pupils that they teach. This has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve and ensured individual pupils who are at risk of underachievement are more quickly identified and helped to get back on track.
- The use of performance management, appraisal and salary progression to improve teaching and drive up standards is underdeveloped. Targets for the current performance year were not set in a timely way and do not include sharply focused expectations for teachers' performance.
- Clarity about the role and expectations of middle leaders has been increased. Some middle leaders have responded well to these higher demands and are making a stronger contribution to leading improvement in their area of responsibility. Others have chosen to relinquish their roles or need to further develop their leadership skills to have a measurable impact.
- The curriculum enables pupils to develop the literacy and numeracy skills they need to succeed at secondary school and it contributes to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. A new approach to curriculum planning has been piloted in Years 3 and 4. This has been successful in capturing pupils' interest and has had a positive impact on boys' writing. This approach is to be rolled out across the school from September 2014 to coincide with the changes to the National Curriculum.
- While the majority of parents are positive about the school's work not all share this view. A few of those who spoke with inspectors raised justified concerns about the impact of staff absence on their child's progress. A minority of others who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire expressed negative views about how well the school responds to their concerns and the information they receive about their child's progress. The school's current leaders and the governing body recognise that more needs to be done to build the partnership between the school and the parents of children it serves.
- Extensive external support has been provided for the school since its last inspection. This has increased during the long-term absence of the headteacher, in part, to enhance capacity for improvement at senior leadership level. Support from a local leader of education (LLE) and her school has helped to develop leadership and the quality of teaching across the school. The local authority has both supported and monitored the school's progress more effectively since June

2013. These contributions from external partners to improvement work and the evaluation of teaching and achievement have been valued by senior leaders and helpful in tackling the school's weaknesses. External support to help in the management of human resource matters has been equally useful.

- The primary sports funding is being used to bring in specialist coaches and, from September, to provide all pupils with an extra hour of physical education each week. The school participates widely in a range of competitive sports across the authority and there is a good range of extracurricular clubs and activities to promote pupils' health and well-being.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have been robust in challenging the school's leaders about its performance, particularly following the results in summer 2013. Governors share the high expectations and vision of the acting senior leaders and consultant headteacher for the school. They are fully involved in shaping its strategic direction and in helping leaders to tackle teacher underperformance. They have a detailed knowledge of the quality of teaching across the school and the extent to which training and support have enabled both teachers and leaders to improve their skills. Following the last inspection, they rightly identified that systems of performance management and appraisal are not being used effectively to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement and are supporting leaders to improve its effectiveness. They have closely monitored the impact that pupil premium funding has had on the achievement of those pupils for whom it is intended to support.

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	107223
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	444450

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	607
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Cade
Headteacher	Adrian Cogill
Date of previous school inspection	26 March 2013
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