

Thorverton Church of England Primary School

School Lane, Thorverton, Exeter, EX5 5NR

Inspection dates 3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The close partnership between the executive headteachers and the head of teaching and learning lies at the heart of the strong leadership, which underpins the good quality of education provided at the school.
- Leaders at all levels have taken decisive action since the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning, and especially to raise pupils' writing skills.
- Governors challenge and support leaders effectively. They know the school well, and check that actions taken are bringing improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils are polite and relate warmly towards each other and adults. The pupils' very positive attitudes to learning enrich their good achievement.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good and pupils know how to keep safe.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and learn successfully in a wide range of subjects, including excellent provision for sport. This is indicated by their high rates of attendance.
- Teaching is good. An increasing amount of teaching is outstanding, especially in developing pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.
- Staff collaborate very effectively with colleagues in the school and across the federation and are committed to continual improvement.
- Children make a good start in the early years and continue to make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress as they move through the school.
- Pupils achieve well overall. Many pupils achieve extremely well in English, to attain well above average standards by the end of Year 6.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and learning in mathematics, especially in fully developing pupils' basic numeracy and calculation skills more quickly.
- New systems for recording checks on children's progress in the early years are not yet used to best effect by all staff to develop children's particular skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited nine lessons and learning activities and was accompanied either by the executive headteacher or the head of teaching and learning for some of these sessions.
- The inspector observed morning and lunch breaks and attended an assembly.
- A meeting was held with a representative group of pupils, specific groups of pupils read to the inspector and other pupils were spoken to during the inspection.
- The inspector met with a group of federation governors and with a member of the local authority staff.
- A number of parents were spoken to by the inspector as they brought and collected their children from school. The inspector also took account of the 27 parents' responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning and undertaking the inspection.
- The inspector interviewed members of staff and senior leaders, and considered 15 staff questionnaires.
- The inspector examined the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information and checks on pupils' progress and the planning and quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspector consulted records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance. He also checked the school's safeguarding policy, procedures and practice.
- The inspector considered the school's primary sport funding action plan. He examined the school's work in updating procedures for checking pupils' progress within the new National Curriculum

Inspection team

Alex Baxter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- One in 15 of the pupils in the school is disabled or has special educational needs, which is below the national average. This proportion varies significantly from year to year across the school.
- One in 10 of the pupils in the school is supported by the pupil premium. This is additional government funding provided to give extra support to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after. Given the size of the school, this proportion of disadvantaged pupils is considerably below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Children in the early years attend on a full-time basis and are accommodated in a mixed Reception and Year 1 class. Other pupils in the school are taught within mixed-age classes.
- Since April 2012, the school has been a member of the Exe-Valley Federation, which includes two other primary schools. A single governing body serves all the schools in the federation.
- The school and federation are jointly led by two executive headteachers who share their duties across the schools in the federation. Each school is managed on a day-to-day basis by a head of teaching and learning.
- A pre-school is located at the school. As it is managed independently, it is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and move pupils' achievement from good to outstanding by ensuring that teachers:
 - more consistently emphasise the development of pupils' basic numeracy and calculation skills, requiring pupils to act on the advice given to them, particularly in their marking, to improve their work
 - in the early years have access to the new system of recording information from checks on children's progress, and that this information is used by all staff to develop children's particular skills.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The executive headteachers, very ably supported by the head of teaching and learning, form a strong leadership team that continues to drive the school forward. They are successful in securing an atmosphere where pupils' excellent behaviour supports their learning. Senior leaders also ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.
- Governors are fully involved in checking the effectiveness of the school, and challenge and support leaders effectively.
- Systems for managing staff performance are rigorous and there is a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning. Teachers are given challenging targets that are closely focused on raising pupils' achievement and supported by relevant training opportunities. Leaders, including governors, also ensure a close match between teachers' performance and their pay progression. All staff benefit from good opportunities to share professional development with colleagues across the federation.
- Middle leaders have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They work effectively with colleagues in the school and across the federation and play a key role in promoting improvement. The sharing of their expertise to improve teaching has helped to bring pupils' writing, an area for improvement in the previous inspection, to a high standard.
- Leaders acknowledge that leadership and management are not yet outstanding. They know that actions to quicken pupils' progress in mathematics and in the early years have not been in place long enough to impact fully. Even so, by judging the school's effectiveness accurately and identifying the correct priorities, leaders show a secure capacity to improve further.
- School leaders ensure that pupil premium funding is used effectively to ensure that additional adult support is provided to prevent disadvantaged pupils from falling behind. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs also benefit from additional support that helps them to progress as well as other pupils. This shows that equal opportunities for different groups of pupils are promoted well, and demonstrates that the school does not tolerate discrimination.
- The school provides a good curriculum that motivates pupils and gives suitable priority to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. Staff provide many opportunities for pupils to develop these skills across the range of subjects, including through video conferencing using computers. This is enriched by the many parents and several governors who use their expertise to also support learning activities such as art, gardening and sport.
- Provision for sport is enriched by links with other schools in the federation and with further education settings. For example, visiting students provide multi-skills coaching in tennis and hockey. The school makes excellent use of the new sport funding to widen the range of sports and provide specialist coaching for teachers and pupils during the weekly Friday Federation Sports at a leisure centre. Additional sports, such as swimming, gymnastics and Zumba, are now provided. The school checks the impact of this work carefully and has noted pupils' improved skills and enthusiasm for sports. For example, about three quarters of the pupils now attend at least one after-school club on a regular basis, which helps them to increase their health and fitness.
- The school promotes the pupils' spiritual and social development well through strong links with the local church and with other schools. Assembly themes such as 'forgiveness' and 'compassion and humility', as well as opportunities to mix with pupils across the federation, extend the pupils' moral and cultural awareness and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority views this as a good school and provides it with a suitable level of support.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors fulfil their statutory and other duties effectively. They work closely with the executive headteachers and are particularly thorough in plotting the strategic direction of the school. Governors strongly support joint events for pupils of similar age across the federation. Through their various sub-committees, governors contribute well to school self-evaluation and improvement planning. They keep their training up to date, for example in examining information about pupils' achievements and in the safe recruitment of staff. Governors visit the school regularly to see the work of the school at first hand, especially teaching and pupils' learning. They talk to staff and pupils and receive detailed reports from the executive headteachers and from the head of teaching and learning. As a result, governors have a clear picture of the quality of teaching. This helps them to ensure that performance management procedures reward good teaching and tackle underachievement. They know how the school's performance compares with that of other schools and carefully check to see that actions taken bring improvement. Governors have supported staff training in the teaching of phonics (the sounds that

letters make) and understand its impact in raising pupils' reading and writing skills. Governors check that additional funding is used effectively to help disadvantaged pupils. They also ensure that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are fully supported and included in all that the school has to offer.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Parents who spoke with the inspector and those who responded to the questionnaire overwhelmingly agree that pupils' exemplary behaviour is a consistent strength of the school. This was confirmed during the inspection by pupils' exceptionally good behaviour in all parts of the school, and their warm responses.
- School records show that there have been no bullying or racist incidents in recent years, and that pupils respond very positively to measures to improve their behaviour on the few occasions that it is found wanting. Pupils say, 'Thorverton is a peaceful and friendly school, where everyone knows each other's personality really well.'
- The school has used its very supportive links with parents and the stimulating range of activities to secure well-above-average attendance. For example, frequent joint sporting opportunities with pupils from other schools in the federation not only enthuse pupils but develop their social skills extremely well.
- The joy and benefits of learning with, and from, each other extend into all classrooms, where pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes and rapidly become engrossed in their work. Pupils' excellent behaviour for learning contributes very strongly to their achievement, especially in English where their willingness to share ideas promotes rapid progress. Pupils proudly say, 'We are encouraged to talk to each other and help each other to learn.'
- Pupils think highly of their school. They take their responsibilities, such as acting as school councillors, very seriously. Their joy and determination in designing games for the School Christmas Fayre further show the open-hearted way they approach their work, not just for themselves but for others too.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. It is not outstanding because systems for recording information are currently being reviewed and updated, and they are not yet fully operational.
- Staff give all the pupils equally close and effective care. They work very supportively with parents and are swift to respond, if needed, to comfort pupils and keep them safe.
- The school's facilities, such as the much improved outdoor and Forest School areas are well maintained and kept safe by well-implemented risk assessments. The school's procedures to keep pupils safe meet requirements, for example by ensuring that staff are fully checked prior to appointment.
- Pupils say, 'We feel safe and the teachers are really kind.' Parents agree, and all those who responded to the questionnaire rightly express appreciation of the understanding and care that staff provide for their children.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including racist and cyber bullying. They value the life skills, road safety, internet safety and other rules taught at school. Consequently, pupils know how to keep themselves and each other safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Good teaching has sustained pupils' good progress over time as pupils move through the school.
- Since the previous inspection, teachers have shared their expertise to secure exemplary teaching in the development of pupils' learning in speaking, listening, reading and writing in all classes.
- Pupils learn well in all classes in response to challenging teaching. All staff are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour and in stimulating pupils' interest, by keeping pupils fully involved in their work. Pupils appreciate the encouragement they are given. They say, 'The teachers are good at what they do.'
- Children learn well in their Reception Year because the help they get and the encouraging relationships they share with their teachers boost their confidence and show them how much more they can achieve by working together.
- Teachers and teaching assistants continue to promote supportive relationships in all classes. Consequently, as the pupils mature they come to understand that by sharing ideas they can contribute strongly to their own learning. This was seen to good effect during mathematics in Years 2, 3 and 4 when

pupils checked each other's predictions before accurately weighing their containers of 'Alice's Potions'.

- Teachers set high expectations and are particularly skilful in questioning the pupils to draw out their ideas and to move their thinking forward. This was seen during literacy in Years 4, 5 and 6, where the pupils' understanding of personification enabled the pupils to produce some high-quality descriptive phrases.
- Pupils' work in books and their responses during lessons indicate that teachers have strengthened the way they teach basic handwriting, grammar and punctuation skills. Marking has also been improved. Clear guidance about how to improve enables pupils across the range of abilities to rapidly develop their expressive writing skills.
- Teaching in mathematics has not been as consistently strong as in other subjects, and teachers have not always given as much focused guidance to pupils on how to improve. This is now receiving attention, but the less well-developed knowledge of number facts still restricts the ability of some pupils to solve problems and progress more quickly in mathematics.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- From their differing starting points, the above average overall level of attainment of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave the school reflects good achievement. In response to strong teaching, standards continue to rise throughout the school, especially in English, where pupils are now making excellent progress.
- Children in the early years make a confident start to school and achieve well in the combined Reception and Year 1 class. School checks and a scrutiny of pupils' work in books show that pupils continue to make at least good, and often better, progress as they move through the school.
- The previous inspection identified weaknesses in pupils' writing in Years 2 and 3. Determined action by leaders has now secured high standards in writing across the school. For example, following discussions about 'fog' in the poem *The King of Confusion*, pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 recorded their feelings very expressively.
- Similarly, very effective teaching of phonics has also accelerated pupils' reading skills. As a result, in recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 screening checks in phonics has continued to be above average. Year 2 screening checks in phonics showed that all pupils reached the expected standard.
- Pupils' increasingly well-above-average reading skills are also evident in national assessments at the end of Years 2 and 6. As they move through the school, pupils clearly demonstrate pleasure in reading books, and display a rapidly increasing ability to use their reading skills to learn across the range of subjects.
- At times, results in national tests have shown that pupils' progress has not been as strong in mathematics. School checks of pupils' developing mathematical skills, and evidence from inspection observations, show that this is because pupils' numeracy and calculation skills are not always fully developed. Teachers are now taking concerted action to lift these skills, but this has not been in place long enough to impact fully.
- There were no disadvantaged pupils in the Year 6 group of pupils that completed the 2013 national tests and very few in this year's tests. The number of disadvantaged pupils is currently so small that it is not possible to compare their attainment with other pupils both in the school and nationally without identifying individuals. The few that are in the school benefit from additional adult support, both in and out of classrooms, and make similarly good progress as other pupils in the school in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Good teaching and extra support ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make the same good progress as their classmates.
- Challenging teaching also helps the most able pupils to progress equally as well as their peers. At times, the less-well-developed numeracy and calculation skills of a few of these pupils reduce their ability to solve more complex problems in mathematics.

The early years provision

is good

- Senior leaders work closely with the teacher of the Reception and Year 1 class, and together they provide good leadership and management and sustain effective early years provision. Colleagues across the federation provide additional expertise and have supported good improvement since the previous inspection.
- Children achieve well during their time in Reception because teaching is good. At times, teaching and children's learning are outstanding during phonics and when additional adult support is being provided for

those with special educational needs.

- Teachers and teaching assistants work well as a team, establishing consistent routines and setting clear expectations that children should relate caringly toward each other. Good pastoral care helps boost the children's self-confidence and promotes their excellent behaviour.
- Teachers encourage the children to reflect about the natural world through poetry and pencil drawing. They use questioning perceptively to explore the children's ideas and promote their moral, social and cultural development.
- As a result, most children achieve a good level of development across the areas of learning, and several excel in their speaking, listening, reading and writing skills. They are well prepared for their future learning when they start Year 1.
- The learning facilities and equipment, both indoors and outside, have been extended and offer a safe, enriching place to learn. They are used well by the children, seen, for example, in their joyful extending of creative and language skills, feeling the texture of shaving foam and talking about it as they made and explored a variety of shapes.
- Staff work very closely with parents and with colleagues in the adjacent pre-school to make sure that children make a smooth and happy start to their full-time schooling. The staff's work in keeping children safe is good.
- Teachers and teaching assistants check children's work and responses in class to evaluate their progress accurately. A new system of recording this information has been introduced this term, but it is not equally accessible for all staff. Consequently, it is not always used well enough to identify the point at which activities need adjusting to ensure that children build further, as quickly as possible, on what they have already learnt.

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	113368
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	453035

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	86
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marion Beresford
Headteacher	Heather Perry and Glynis Harris Executive headteachers
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2012
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