

# Glastonbury Thorn School

Pigott Drive, Shenley Church End, Milton Keynes, MK5 6BX

**Inspection dates** 15–16 January 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The school is outstanding because it is exceptionally well led and managed by the headteacher and other leaders.
- Leaders have led a relentless drive for continued improvement that is based on a very clear picture of the main priorities. This has helped both pupils' achievement and teaching to improve quickly since the previous inspection.
- The knowledgeable governing body plays a key part in the school's success. The governors provide high levels of challenge and check for themselves that all pupils are doing well enough.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the early years provision where teaching promotes the very rapid development of early literacy and numeracy skills.
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. They make extremely fast progress in Years 1 and 2. Their attainment is above average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers meet the emotional, social and academic needs of different groups of pupils extremely well. They help pupils to develop a genuine love of learning and to understand that they can achieve anything if they always do their best.
- Teachers have worked hard and with great success to improve the feedback that they give to pupils in English so that they are clear about what they have done well and what still needs improving.
- Support for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs is exceptionally strong and very well matched to their needs. Disadvantaged pupils are also given high-quality support and this helps them to learn very quickly.
- There is a very happy atmosphere in school. Pupils feel very safe and behave exceptionally well at all times. They are sociable and friendly, and show excellent consideration, tolerance and respect for the needs of others.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school because learning is enriched by exciting activities both in and out of lessons. These help to bring subjects alive.
- Parents are very supportive. They are very pleased with the work of the school and share the pride of staff in its success. Parents especially like the way that staff care for their children.
- Leaders are helping other schools to improve by sharing good practice.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 15 lessons, five of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or the deputy headteacher. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to lessons.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of the views of 57 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors also analysed the school's own surveys of parental views and talked to parents at the end of the school day.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, heard pupils read, and looked at a number of documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed 43 questionnaires from staff.

## Inspection team

Mike Capper, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tim Lawes

Additional Inspector

Anna Majcher

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized infant school. Over half of pupils travel to the school from outside the local community.
- Pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds, with around half being White British and one in five Indian. Around a third of pupils speak English as an additional language. The most common home languages for these pupils are Gujarati and Punjabi.
- Children in early years provision are taught full time in one of three Reception classes.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is around one in twenty. This proportion is below average when compared with all schools nationally.
- Around one in eight pupils is supported by the pupil premium. This is lower than the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided to give extra support to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The headteacher provides support to newly appointed headteachers in other local schools.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on recent initiatives to ensure that the feedback given to pupils about what they have done well or how to improve is as strong in mathematics as it is in English.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are outstanding

- Outstanding leadership has helped the school to improve very quickly since the previous inspection. The school's mission statement, 'Every day, getting better, in every way' is shared and understood by all members of staff and is at the heart of all they do. Together, staff very diligently promote equality of opportunity, foster good relationships and tackle discrimination so that all pupils can flourish both socially and academically. This ensures complete consistency of approach in the way staff support the pupils, some of whom face acute challenges in their life outside school.
- The management of teaching is excellent. The headteacher and deputy headteacher enable all staff to develop their skills and to fulfil their potential as both teachers and present or future leaders. Teachers receive high-quality support and guidance to help them improve, with training linked well to individual needs as well as those of the school. This has ensured that teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- Middle leaders such as those in charge of subjects play a key part in driving improvement. They are very knowledgeable about their subjects. They check provision very carefully by visiting lessons, talking to pupils and analysing data. This means that they are very clear about the next steps for making provision even more effective. For example, recent work on developing the feedback given to pupils in English has tackled an identified weakness and has been highly effective. Plans are already in place to make similar improvements in mathematics.
- Additional funding available for disadvantaged pupils through the pupil premium is used extremely effectively to help eligible pupils take a full part in school life and benefit from additional help from adults. The impact of this is evident in the significant narrowing of gaps in achievement between eligible pupils and others, and the high standards achieved by disadvantaged pupils in most years.
- Leaders work closely with the local authority, which has provided suitable 'light-touch' support to the school. They are also playing an increasingly strong part in helping other schools to improve. For example, leaders offer highly valued support to new headteachers in the local authority. The partnership with parents is also very strong. Parents are highly complementary of the school and its work, with one summing up their views when commenting that, 'I couldn't have chosen a better starting place for my child's education.'
- Very good use is made of additional government funding for school sports. It has helped to improve the skills of teachers as well as broadening pupils' experiences. Participation in physical activities has increased, and this is contributing well to pupils' healthy lifestyles. Spending is monitored very carefully and its impact is shared with governors and parents through a very detailed report that is published on the school's website.
- The school provides pupils with many memorable experiences through lessons, clubs and visits. Work is engaging and ensures that pupils greatly enjoy school. Work both in and out of lessons makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Staff and governors are excellent role models in the way that they promote values such as trust, kindness and responsibility. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about or to celebrate religions and faiths other than their own through activities such as 'One World Week'. They develop very good tolerance and respect for others and are prepared very well for life in multicultural Britain.
- Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and carry out rigorous audits to ensure the pupils' safety is maintained at all times.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body provides very strong support and challenge to other school leaders. Governors are very knowledgeable about what the school does well and what needs improving because they have very good systems to check things for themselves. They analyse data on pupils' performance thoroughly and this helps them to form a very clear picture about how well the school compares with others. They have been diligent in challenging the school about the use of the pupil premium, asking probing questions to ensure that the apparent dip in the attainment of eligible pupils in 2014 was not part of an emerging trend. They evaluate carefully all spending, including the pupil premium, ensuring that is used to excellent effect to improve provision for pupils. Governors check how well school leaders improve the quality of teaching. They know where it is strongest and ensure that decisions about teachers' pay are appropriately linked to their performance and responsibilities

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding****Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- All pupils, staff and parents agree that behaviour is a key strength of the school and this is confirmed by inspectors. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary at all times and they have highly positive attitudes towards learning. They talk enthusiastically about lessons and other aspects of school life.
- Pupils clearly like school very much. They look after the building and do not drop litter. They get on very well together, showing great concern for the needs of others. At playtimes, 'buddies' help pupils who have a problem and ensure that play is calm and harmonious.
- In lessons, pupils work very hard, showing an exceptionally strong awareness of how their behaviour can have an impact on others in the open-plan work areas. They are polite and courteous and talk eagerly to visitors about their work. They praise the teachers and say that they provide work which challenges them fully. They know that it is acceptable to make mistakes because, as one pupil said, 'That is how we learn more.'
- Pupils are very keen to take responsibility and they do this exceptionally well. The school council gives pupils a very strong voice in the life of the school. For example, they have recently contributed extremely well to discussions on new playground markings.
- Rates of attendance have improved since the last inspection and are now slightly above average. Absences are mainly due to illness as pupils say, 'We do not want to miss school.'

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- All parents who replied to the online questionnaire feel that their children are kept safe at school. Pupils also say that they feel very safe.
- School records show that poor behaviour such as bullying is extremely rare, but if it does occur, it is tackled very quickly. Pupils know who to turn to if they have a worry and they all say that the adults 'listen to us.'
- Pupils have a very good knowledge for their age of the dangers of the internet and the steps they should take to stay safe. They know that bullying can take many forms but report that in this school, 'Everyone is kind to each other.'
- When playing outside or moving around school, pupils have a very good understanding of the need to moderate their behaviour to keep others safe. For example, at playtimes, pupils who play football or run around are very careful to avoid causing discomfort or danger to others.

**The quality of teaching is outstanding**

- High-quality teaching has an excellent impact on pupils' learning over time, ensuring outstanding achievement and preparing them extremely well for the next stage of their education.
- Teachers have excellent relationships with their pupils and plan work that is fun and engaging. They have very high expectations of both the quality and quantity of pupils' work and will accept nothing but the best. Throughout the school, pupils talk positively about how much they enjoy lessons. They confidently explain what they have learnt and talk with pride about their work. This is reflected in pupils' books, which are very tidy and well presented.
- Reading, writing and numeracy are taught extremely well, with skills improving very quickly. The high priority given to the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds that they make), spelling and letter formation ensures that pupils read and write very competently. In mathematics, teachers continually reinforce learning by, for example, giving pupils many opportunities to solve problems or to carry out investigations.
- Across the school, teachers plan work that is highly effective in meeting the needs of different pupils. The most able are challenged well because teachers have a very secure knowledge of what they can already do and they provide work that builds on this. Less-able pupils, the disabled and those who have special educational needs are also provided with just the right level of challenge in lessons. Teachers adapt work to their needs and make excellent use of the skilled teaching assistants to support their learning.
- Teachers take excellent account of the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language. They ensure that pupils understand clearly new vocabulary and give them extra help when needed so that they

can take a full part in all activities.

- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and follow the school policy consistently. The marking of work in English provides pupils with very clear and constructive suggestions for improvement. Pupils are clear about what they need to do better and this has a very positive impact on their progress. However, the marking in mathematics does not always make clear to pupils how they can improve their work.
- Parents are very pleased with the quality of the teaching across the school. They support the school enthusiastically by helping with homework and hearing their children read regularly.

### The achievement of pupils

**is outstanding**

- When children start school in the Reception Year, less than half are working at a typical level of development for their age. From these low starting points, pupils make excellent progress. Pupils' attainment improves very quickly as they move through the school and is consistently significantly above average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics. Attainment is much higher than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Year 2 pupils have very well-developed skills in literacy and numeracy. They speak very confidently and listen carefully when others are talking. They read exceptionally well both in literacy lessons and when working in other subjects. They talk enthusiastically about favourite authors and confidently sound-out new words. They have a very good knowledge of phonics. This is reflected in national phonics screening checks at the end of Year 1, with the school exceeding national averages for the last three years.
- Pupils' writing skills improve very quickly. The current Year 2 is the first group that has been taught a joined-up handwriting style from when they started school and this is evident in their well-presented and neat writing. Pupils write confidently in different subjects, spelling new words accurately most of the time and using increasingly complex punctuation as they get older.
- In mathematics, pupils add and subtract accurately. They have a very good understanding of mathematical concepts such as shapes and are able to apply these skills to investigations or problems. For example, Year 2 pupils made very good use of their mathematical skills to investigate what happens when odd numbers are added together.
- The school successfully ensures that all groups achieve extremely well over time. Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs receive excellent support, enabling them to acquire new skills and knowledge very quickly, with the vast majority reaching the expected level for their age by the end of Year 2.
- The most able also achieve extremely well. Work is well matched to need and provides high levels of challenge. Consequently, by the end of Year 2 in 2014, over a half of pupils were already working two years beyond the expected level for their age.
- In most years, the small number of disadvantaged pupils who receive additional government funding attain at least as well as all pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, and the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates is much lower than that found nationally. This was not the case in 2014 when the gap at the end of Year 2 was larger than is typical. In this year, attainment was affected by several less-able pupils who joined the school late in Year 2 as well as a higher than usual proportion of pupils with a range of very complex emotional, social and academic needs. Nonetheless, an analysis of school data and pupils' work from last year shows that from much lower starting points than usual these pupils made excellent progress and the gap between their attainment and that of others was much smaller than when they started school. In the current year, disadvantaged pupils are already working at similar levels in reading, writing and mathematics as their classmates and, as for other pupils, their achievement is excellent.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language, including those from Indian families or other backgrounds, make rapid progress in improving their speaking skills. Their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is at least as high as others by the end of Year 2.

### The early years provision

**is outstanding**

- The early years provision is outstanding and this ensures that children are extremely well prepared both socially and academically to start Year 1. Their skills, knowledge and understanding improve very quickly and, by the end of the year, their attainment is above average.
- Children do so well because teaching very successfully meets differing needs. Children who are disabled or who have special educational needs make outstanding progress. The most-able children are also well

provided for and staff are very aware of all individuals' prior knowledge and skills.

- Members of staff work together well to check children's learning and to move learning on when they are ready. Assessments are thorough and accurate, and give a very clear picture of progress over time. Staff are very adept at asking the right question to help deepen children's understanding of what they are learning. For example, when working with a group of children who were using funnels to pour sand, a discussion on their comparative size helped children to learn new vocabulary such as 'larger' and 'smaller'.
- Children's behaviour is exemplary. They very quickly develop a positive attitude towards learning. There is a delightful atmosphere as children work together both indoors and outdoors to improve their skills. Children from different backgrounds work and play together happily and provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Children feel very safe and soon understand what they need to do to avoid danger. For example, they help the teachers to write risk assessments before going on a walk to the local woods.
- Early years provision is very well led and managed. The relatively new leader has a very good understanding of priorities, and changes in areas such as the arrangements for how children start school have already had a positive effect in helping children to settle. Work on introducing online 'Learning Journals' has helped parents to become more involved in their children's learning on a daily basis. They give a very clear picture of children's excellent progress over time.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	110400
<b>Local authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	448412

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	263
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Andy Roberts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Fiona Webb
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	4–5 February 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 504648
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