

Thornhill Primary School

Thornhill Road, London, N1 1HX

Inspection dates 28–29 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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 school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Senior leaders and governors have not been effective enough in reducing incidences of discriminatory behaviour by a small number of pupils.
- Senior leaders have missed opportunities to make the school as safe as it could be.
- Governors have missed opportunities to challenge senior leaders rigorously enough. As a result, some aspects of leadership, behaviour and safety require improvement.
- Leaders do not always record enough information when they investigate matters related to behaviour and safety.
- Teachers do not always check how accurate pupils are when they mark each other's work. Pupils do not make enough use of teachers' marking and comments to improve their work. They are not expected to present their work in books to a high enough standard.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have made sure that teaching over time is good. This has led to the improvements seen in achievement over recent years.
- Attendance has improved and is now good.
- The curriculum inspires pupils to be curious and makes sure that they see learning as an enjoyable experience.
- Leaders provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural education. Pupils understand and make valuable contributions to their community.
- The participation and success of pupils in sport has improved as a result of effective use of additional funding.
- Parents, staff and pupils appreciate the steps staff take to make pupils feel a valued part of the school community.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons or part lessons. Four were observed jointly with the headteacher, one of assistant headteachers and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In addition, inspectors observed two assemblies, listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with pupils and talked with them about their work. Meetings were held with governors, middle leaders and a representative of the local authority.
- School documents, records and policies were scrutinised. Records related to staff appraisal, behaviour and safety, attendance, and the checks leaders have made on teaching were also seen.
- Inspectors took account of 102 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 43 questionnaires from staff.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Clementina Olufunke Aina

Additional Inspector

Karen Jaeggi

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average primary school. There are two classes in each year group. The nursery includes 44 part-time pupils.
- The proportion of pupils receiving support from pupil premium funding (the extra government support for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children in public care and those from service families) is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than average. A wide range of different groups are represented. Many of these pupils speak English as an additional language though few are at an early stage of acquiring English.
- Compared to national figures, the proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is high. The proportion of those at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also high.
- In 2014 the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In June 2014 the headteacher became seriously ill and has still not returned to work. At the same time the assistant headteacher left the school due to promotion. In September 2014 governors appointed an interim headteacher. She left the school at the end of December 2014. The school is now led by an Executive headteacher and two assistant headteachers. The Executive headteacher is also the substantive headteacher of Gillespie Primary School in Islington. He has been appointed as Executive headteacher at Thornhill Primary School for an initial period of two terms until September 2015.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is outstanding by:
 - checking that pupils use teachers' marked comments to improve their work.
- Raise achievement so that it is outstanding by:
 - broadening opportunities for pupils to learn skills particular to the whole range of subjects
 - insisting that pupils complete all their work and present it to the highest standard of which they are capable.
- Improve behaviour and safety by:
 - eradicating the use of discriminatory language by pupils
 - making sure pupils always play safely
 - keeping effective records of all incidents and issues related to behaviour and safety
 - identifying and assessing risks effectively.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring plans for improvement can be used by all leaders, including governors, to evaluate the impact of their actions
 - records of actions taken to evaluate their impact and secure improvements
 - strengthening governance by ensuring that governors have the means to hold school leaders to account for putting agreed policies and plans for improvement into practice

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management requires improvement. Leaders have not kept sufficiently detailed records of some instances when pupils' behaviour has been unacceptable. They have ensured that statutory policies and procedures related to safeguarding are in place. However, some policies have not been reviewed promptly enough. Leaders have not checked that all procedures are followed according to policy. As a result, some investigations related to safeguarding are not recorded clearly enough or in sufficient detail. Opportunities to improve behaviour and safety have been missed.
 - The Executive headteacher has acquired an accurate picture of the school's effectiveness in the very short time he has been at the school.
 - Senior leaders have created a generally harmonious community where staff, parents and pupils feel valued and included. They have managed to make sure adults and pupils share a passion for learning and a keen curiosity. As a result, nearly all pupils view learning as exciting and enjoyable. This plays a significant part in helping them to achieve well.
 - Leaders have ensured that teaching is consistently good and has led to good achievement for all groups of pupils. However, their achievement is not yet outstanding because leaders have not checked thoroughly or promptly enough on the progress of all these groups.
 - The curriculum is good, offering suitable breadth and balance. It enables pupils to understand and appreciate how subjects link with one another. It allows pupils to understand the process of learning and apply this to new challenges. Leaders have made sure that pupils get high quality opportunities to learn how their community works and are able to contribute positively to it. For example, during the inspection, pupils were preparing questions to ask the local mayor on a visit to the town hall. Leaders enable pupils to appreciate and use fundamental British values at school. For example, pupils have a sophisticated understanding of the democratic principles on which their school council is based. This is preparing them very well for their future lives in modern Britain.
 - The wide range of opportunities for pupils to acquire and nurture cultural interests over time is a strength of the school. The strong emphasis that teachers place on discussion and collaboration leads to very good social development for most pupils. Their spiritual and moral education is enhanced because leaders make sure pupils learn about how others choose to live. However, the actions of a small number of pupils demonstrate a much poorer understanding of social and moral values.
 - Middle leaders are committed to improving provision through working together. They are involved in checking on the quality of teaching and have contributed fully to the development of an exciting curriculum. However, their judgements on teaching are not always accurate. Their analysis of the achievement of groups is not rigorous enough to promote outstanding achievement. The school's current action plan does not include all leaders in evaluating the impact of their work.
 - The additional sports funding has been used well to increase the range of sports on offer, broaden participation and bring success in competitions. The opinions of parents and pupils have been considered in deciding how to spend this money.
 - The local authority has a broadly accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has provided important support to leaders and governors to secure continuity of leadership in the absence of the headteacher.
 - Almost all parents have a high regard for the work of the school. They are very positive about the way that their children are taught and inspired to learn. Many parents express admiration for way the school celebrates and values its diversity of cultures.
- **The governance of the school:**
- Governors say they have learned valuable lessons from recent challenges. They know that further training and development is necessary so they can hold leaders more closely to account. As a result they have decided to commission an external review of governance and consider reconstitution.
 - Governors have a good understanding of the way that the school spends additional funding. They gain sufficient reliable information about the quality of teaching to help them decide on the progression of teachers' pay. This information also enable them to tackle any underperformance promptly and robustly. However, they do not ask leaders to give them sufficiently detailed information about how pupils entitled to this funding are progressing. As a result, their knowledge of all groups of pupils' achievement is not sharp enough.
 - Governors have ensured that they fulfil their statutory duties relating to safeguarding. However, they have not checked thoroughly enough on how well leaders gather and analyse information about some

aspects of the school's provision. As a result they have not been successful enough in holding leaders to account for all of their responsibilities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Some pupils do not understand how to behave appropriately when they are playing outside. Adults responsible for pupils' supervision do not intervene quickly enough to help when their play becomes too boisterous.
- A number of incidents involving pupils insulting one another using racist or homophobic language have been recorded by school leaders. In October 2014 there were four such incidents in a few days, each involving different pupils. Leaders say these incidents nearly always involve a small number of pupils with identified special educational needs. However, they have not kept track of how these incidents have been dealt with.
- There have been no exclusions since 2013.
- There are few recorded instances of bullying. However, leaders have not evaluated how successful their attempts to resolve these incidents have been. It is not clear from written records whether leaders consider the discriminatory behaviour of a small number of pupils to be bullying or not.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons. Levels of disruption are very low. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning because they are inspired by the way teachers help them learn. Pupils receive good guidance which enables them to persevere with problem-solving and harder work. However, these positive attitudes are not always reflected in the standards of presentation seen in pupils' books. Some work is poorly presented and incomplete.
- Attendance is good. It has improved since the last inspection because leaders have been successful in helping parents understand the importance of making sure that children attend regularly. They hold parents to account for this well by monitoring attendance very effectively.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure requires improvement.
- School leaders do not always identify potential risks to safety or take prompt, effective steps to reduce these risks. As a result, they have not taken every opportunity to make the school as safe as it could be.
- Leaders have made sure that pupils who need additional support are well guided and supervised. This aspect of the school's work is well monitored and evaluated.
- Leaders have made sure that checks required on the suitability of adults who work in the school are done and recorded promptly and properly. However, leaders have not made sure all staff fully understand how to protect the confidentiality of information.
- Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe very well. They appreciate the opportunity to spend time talking about their concerns. They know how to use the internet safely and can explain how the school helps them to understand how to stay safe on public transport.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching is good. It leads to good progress for most pupils and promotes equality of opportunity well. Teachers encourage all pupils to discuss ideas and opinions. As a result, pupils of all ages are capable of articulate, confident responses to teachers' questions.
- Teachers use modern technology skilfully to promote and enrich learning in some subjects. For example, pupils were able to use tablet computers in a gymnastics lesson seen during the inspection. The videos of their movements allowed them to identify how to refine the sequence of their performances.
- Teachers make sure that pupils are provided with interesting and relevant contexts in which to learn. For instance, they are challenged to work out how much food is wasted in school. This is helping them to understand how mathematics can be applied to social and moral issues. Teachers also provide meaningful reasons for pupils to write. For example, pupils write and then perform poetry in public alongside published authors.
- Teachers introduce new learning objectives clearly. Pupils of all abilities understand what they are

expected to learn. This enables them to get off to a good start in lessons. They teach pupils how to use technical language effectively. Guided reading lessons are successful in teaching pupils how to use and enjoy different genres of book.

- Teachers do not always check the accuracy of the marking that pupils complete for one another. As a result, sometimes pupils get inaccurate guidance on how they can improve their work. This holds up learning for some pupils, especially the less able. Some marking by teachers is successful. Art sketchbooks are often marked with specific comments about artistic techniques which help children to improve work rapidly. However, this is not yet consistent in all subjects and classrooms. When teachers do comment on pupils' work, children do not always act on them often enough to improve their learning.
- Pupils acquire new mathematical skills securely and rapidly. Teachers make sure that pupils have different strategies to help solve problems and work out the answers to calculations. For example, in a lesson seen on multiplication, pupils were using repeated in addition to correct misconceptions about multiplication facts.
- The manner in which pupils who speak English as an additional language acquire new skills in reading and writing is well understood and catered for by teachers.
- More-able pupils benefit from opportunities to evaluate their own work and make connections between related aspects of learning. This enables them to persevere and tackle really challenging problems effectively. As a result they achieve well.
- Other adults provide good support for pupils of all abilities. They work closely with the class teacher and share their knowledge about pupils' learning needs effectively.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress because teachers accurately identify what children need to do in order to develop their early reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Nearly every pupil reaches the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics (the sounds that letters make) screening check.
- By the end of Key Stage 1, the proportion of pupils who reach the expected level is greater than average in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion who achieve a higher level of attainment is also better than the national average. Disadvantaged pupils do as well as other pupils nationally but do not attain as well as other pupils in the school. This is because many of the pupils not entitled to funding reach the higher level of attainment.
- Pupils' progress through Key Stage 2 is good and sometimes outstanding. They reach levels of attainment which are higher than the national average in reading, and significantly higher in writing and mathematics. The rate of progress is always good but varies a little from different starting points. Achievement has been improving over the last three years.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve better than similar pupils nationally by the end of Key Stage 2. Gaps remain between their attainment and that of other pupils in the school because far fewer reach the highest levels. In reading these pupils are just over six months behind other pupils in the school. In writing the gap is nearly sixteen months. In mathematics, disadvantaged pupils are about ten months behind. The gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally has also broadened slightly since 2013. In reading, the gap is about two months; in writing, these pupils are just over three months behind other pupils; and in mathematics there is a gap of just under three months.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make the same rate of progress as other pupils in the school.
- Pupils demonstrate very good standards of reading. Older pupils are able to express reasons for their reading choices. They read for pleasure and can explain why they like a particular genre of literature.
- Pupils with disabilities and special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. Their needs are well identified and catered for by effective interventions.
- Achievement in the full range of subjects is not outstanding. Pupils do not receive enough specific guidance on how to improve their skills in individual subjects. They are not given sufficient opportunity to learn about some themes in sufficient depth. As a result pupils do not always move on to harder work as soon as they are ready.
- One reason why achievement is not outstanding is that work in pupils' books does not always show the same strong progress evident in end of key stage outcomes. There is some incomplete and repetitive work which sometimes makes it difficult to identify progress

The early years provision**is good**

- Teachers accurately identify the starting points of children on entry. They use this information to plan effective activities which enable children to make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of pupils attaining a good level of development by the end of the Reception year is improving as a result.
- Adults in the setting make sure children understand how they can use the activities on offer to develop their skills. Good teaching of skills is consistent across all the areas of learning. As a result, by the end of the Reception year children are well prepared for starting Year 1.
- The good curriculum provided offers children an exciting and diverse range of appropriate experiences to extend their learning. The opportunities on offer outside are more restricted than those available indoors. There is not enough variety of activities on offer to capture children's imagination fully. As a result, children sometimes prefer to stay indoors.
- Children's behaviour is good because they are clear about what teachers expect of them. Children are well cared for and teaching staff know the needs of individuals well. Teachers expect children to take some responsibility for their own learning from an early age. This helps them acquire social and emotional skills rapidly.
- Teachers provide a safe, secure and well supervised environment for children to learn in.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has used additional funding for disadvantaged pupils more effectively since the beginning of the current school year. As a result the gaps between achievement of these pupils and others are now narrowing.

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	100425
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	448191

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	457
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms L McCrindle
Headteacher	Mr M Owens
Date of previous school inspection	27 April 2010
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