

# Thornley Primary School

Cooper's Terrace, Thornley, Durham, DH6 3DZ

**Inspection dates** 25–26 March 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- From starting school with knowledge and skills below those typically expected for their age, children catch up quickly in their early years, so most are well prepared to join Year 1.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 rose well in 2014, following a dip in 2013, to broadly average in mathematics, although they remained below average in reading and writing.
- At the end of Year 6 pupils' standards are above average in mathematics and well above average in reading and writing as well as in grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make strong progress in their learning because of the high quality support they receive from skilled teaching assistants.
- Attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils compared to other pupils in school and nationally closed well in 2014 because of the good support they received through careful spending of pupil premium funding.
- Pupils are well behaved, polite and well mannered around school. They proudly report there is no bullying in their school.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and are appreciative of the lengths school staff go to ensure that they are kept safe at school.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and their fellow leaders and managers have securely driven improvement in achievement.
- Teaching is good. Weaknesses which caused the dip in Year 2 results in 2013 were clearly identified and successfully eliminated.
- Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school which helps them to drive further improvements to pupils' achievement securely.
- The school has improved well since the previous inspection and continues to improve.
- Early years provision is led well and effective, giving children a strong start to their education.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally leaders and managers measure school improvement insufficiently well. As a result, they do not always know how well their actions are improving pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' progress in learning occasionally slows slightly in a few lessons.
- Insufficient opportunities are provided for middle leaders to check on how achievement is improving in the subjects they manage.
- Marking does not always fully reflect school guidelines and occasionally standards of presentation are not high enough.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning and teaching in lessons and part-lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, school staff, two members of the governing body, including the Chair and with a representative of the local authority.
- Discussions were held with parents and groups of pupils. Inspectors also spoke informally to pupils in lessons and during break and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised the work pupils produced during lessons and in their books over time. They also listened to a small number of pupils from Year 1 and Year 2 read.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school; they also looked at the latest school data on pupils' achievement and the progress they are currently making. Other documentation scrutinised included development plans as well as safeguarding information, behaviour logs, attendance records and minutes of recent meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 18 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire, as well as the 11 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Declan McCauley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Dawn Foster

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is slightly greater than 22%, which is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is slightly less than 40%, which is above the national average. (The term disadvantaged pupils is used to describe those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority). The school receives additional funding called the pupil premium for these pupils.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- Children are taught in the nursery on a part-time basis and full time in the Reception year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

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

- Further improve the quality of teaching to strengthen pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring that marking complies fully with school guidelines and high quality presentation is always expected
  - making sure pupils' learning does not slow in any lessons
  - ensuring that school leaders measure more accurately the success of their specific actions to improve pupils' achievement
  - giving middle leaders greater opportunities to check that achievement is good enough in the subjects they manage.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- School is led well by a strong leadership team which is improving the school well to ensure that pupils' achievement is good. The headteacher and senior leaders work closely with well-informed governors giving clear guidance to staff on expecting the best from all pupils. Collectively they have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, which is a strong driver for further improvement.
- Pupils thrive academically in the culture of high expectation and know that the highest standards of behaviour are demanded at all times.
- Teaching is led well by a group of innovative and highly motivated middle leaders who are effective in their roles. They have done much to ensure that pupils' progress in their learning is increasing well and are determined to improve achievement further. The middle leaders were previously more involved in checking on how well achievement in their subjects was improving. They currently have insufficient opportunity to do this effectively.
- Governance is effective. Together with senior leaders governors have ensured that the pupil premium is used effectively to narrow attainment gaps for disadvantaged pupils in school. The latest school data show these gaps are continuing to narrow well across the school.
- All pupils are given equal opportunities to learn well in school, there is no discrimination. Very strong relationships exist in school which support good learning in lessons because they are promoted effectively through the school values of inclusion and respect for others.
- The curriculum is exciting, well designed and very engaging for pupils; it supports learning effectively and prepares pupils well for living in modern Britain. Many opportunities are taken successfully to bring the curriculum to life for pupils. Pupils from Year 6 enjoyed a visit to London, where they were taken on a tour of Westminster by two Members of Parliament representing constituencies local to the school. This introduced pupils well to democracy. During the visit pupils also visited the Tower of London and Saint Paul's Cathedral. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the curriculum.
- Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are effective and meet statutory requirements. Pupils speak appreciatively about the lengths to which adults go to keep them safe in school, such as the secure fences and secure access point to the school building. Pupils explain they are confident that anyone who is in school is there as an official visitor if they are wearing their stick-on photo identification labels given to them once they have been checked into school. Pupils are clear about actions they should take in the unlikely situation where they come across anyone who should not be in school.
- The local authority provides a good level of support to school, as and when it is required, which helps the school well on its quest to become outstanding. Recently a 'health check' was undertaken by a local authority officer to validate the school's view of how well it was performing. Inspectors found much evidence to agree that the school's self-evaluation is accurate.
- Additional funding provided to improve primary sport is used well by the school. Pupils now participate in a much wider range of sports activities. This school year pupils have participated in an after-school gymnastics club which led to Key Stage 1 pupils successfully competing and winning a competition at East Durham College.
- Early years and special educational needs are managed well by dedicated and diligent middle leaders.
- The school development plan is focused well on further school improvement. However, school leaders are not always able to measure the impact of specific identified actions to check on how well they are aiding improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are a strong force for improvement in school and have successfully created a school culture where pupils thrive in their education from the time they join school until they leave, with standards which are well above average. Governors play an effective role in continuing to improve the school further. Recently governors have undertaken additional training on school data which helps them to understand clearly how pupils in school are achieving compared to other pupils nationally. Governors are very clear about expecting the best from all teachers and display a good knowledge of strengths and minor weaknesses in the quality of teaching in school. When previous weak teaching caused a dip in standards in Year 2 in 2013, governors acted successfully and swiftly with senior leaders to overcome the problem. The performance of staff is managed well and good teaching is rewarded financially.

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

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their behaviour in lessons makes a strong contribution to their good achievement. Pupils are polite, helpful and well mannered around school. They regularly hold doors open for one another and their teachers.
- 'Family ambassadors' are proud of the role they play in helping other pupils to behave well around school; they take on additional responsibilities which have a positive impact on the behaviour of others.
- Pupils say behaviour in school is good; this view is shared by many staff and parents.
- Pupils are smartly dressed in their uniforms and display a sense of pride in their school community. The school is a positive place in which to learn where pupils enjoy attending regularly; it is underpinned well by the values of tolerance and respect for all.
- Pupils proudly report that bullying is not a problem in the school. Pupils are not tolerant of anyone who picks on someone else and very few incidents of poor behaviour need to be dealt with by staff members.

**Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- All parents who participated in the Parent View survey agree that their children feel safe at Thornley. This view is also supported by pupils and staff.
- The site is very secure and pupils feel safe because of this. They know that nobody can gain access to the school unless they are supposed to be there. This helps make pupils feel confident that they are safe in school.
- Rigorous checks are made before anyone is permitted to work in the school, either as a member of staff or as a volunteer. All staff undertake regular training on the safeguarding of pupils to ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in school and in the wider community, including when using the Internet.

**The quality of teaching is good**

- Good teaching over time has a strong impact on the good achievement of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. From individual starting points pupils excel in their learning, so they leave Year 6 with high standards of attainment.
- Learning takes place in a culture of high expectation which enables pupils to excel in their learning. Subject knowledge is strong and used well to support effective learning. Information computer technology is used well to support effective learning.
- Skilled teaching assistants support disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs effectively, helping them to achieve well. One group of pupils in Key Stage 1 were observed participating in a challenging and demanding writing activity that involved creating a successful description of Paddington Bear. The group was effectively supported by a teaching assistant.
- Pupils are taught to read well. In lessons where pupils focus on reading they are confident and clearly have a love of reading. In one lesson one pupil explained his favourite book was Fantastic Mister Fox written by Roald Dahl. When questioned further, he explained that he admired the main character who was a little mischievous. This was a characteristic the pupil said he shared himself.
- Mathematics lessons are very practical in school and pupils benefit from these learning experiences which help them to understand mathematical concepts well. This approach is successful and achievement in mathematics is a clear strength in school because pupils achieve well in the subject.
- Pupils' books show that they make strong progress in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. Many books are marked in line with the school policy, although occasionally this is not consistently the case. A few teachers do not always expect pupils' presentation to be of a high enough standard.
- Occasionally some pupils' progress in lessons slows when they are asked to undertake certain learning activities. Staff do not consistently check that all pupils are participating fully so they make the progress they should.

**The achievement of pupils** is good

- From starting points with knowledge and skills which are below those typical for their age, children make strong progress in early years so they catch up well in their learning and development. On leaving early years in 2014, most children were well prepared to join Year 1 and this year the proportion is confidently predicted to improve greatly.
- Pupils are now making strong progress across Year 1 and Year 2. The latest school data show they are making rapid gains in their learning. In 2014 standards reached by pupils in Year 2 rose substantially from the previous year to broadly average in mathematics, while they remained below average in reading and writing. The latest robust school progress data show pupils are well on track to reach targets which are at least average at the end of Year 2 this year.
- Standards reached by pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2014 were higher than average because of the very strong progress they made in their learning as they moved through Key Stage 2. School data show this is again the case this year and rapid gains in learning are being made because of effective teaching.
- When achievement at the end of Year 2 dipped in 2013, school leaders took decisive action successfully to speed up pupils' progress in their learning. This can now be seen in the improvements in Key Stage 1.
- Disadvantaged pupils progress well in school because of the high quality of support provided through the effective use of pupil premium funding. This was so successful that in 2014 they attained standards which were higher than other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics as well as grammar, punctuation and spelling. Attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils in school compared to other pupils in school and to other pupils nationally closed well in 2014.
- In 2014 disadvantaged pupils in school compared to other pupils in school were just over half a term behind in mathematics, and about a term behind in reading and writing. When compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils in school were about a term and a half ahead in mathematics and reading and nearly two terms ahead in writing. Clearly disadvantaged pupils achieve well at Thornley.
- Previously the most able pupils have reached standards below the most able nationally at the end of Year 2, but the latest school data now show that this is no longer the case. They are well on their way to reaching the higher levels this year. At the end of Year 6 the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 remained high in 2014 and school data show that this is expected again this year.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is good. They are supported very well in their learning in school and the education they receive meets their needs effectively.

**The early years provision** is good

- Children progress well in their learning and development from the point of joining early years. The staff team works well together to ensure that children settle rapidly to the routines of the day at Thornley. This helps children to quickly feel secure in the early years area.
- The early years provision is effective and supports children's learning and development well. The provision is led and managed effectively by a strong leader who has moulded an effective team who help children to catch up well in their learning and development.
- By the end of early years an increasing proportion is well prepared to enter Year 1. The proportion is increasing because of improvements in the quality of provision which have been put in place securely since the previous inspection. Children are given a wide range of activities from which to select. The activities are well thought out by adults to enable children to develop their communication and language skills. This is because this is an area where the staff team have identified a particular weakness in many children's development.
- Children enjoy participating in the many exciting and engaging activities in the classroom and in the outdoor area; they are very sociable and enjoy the company of one another and the staff team. The children behave well in early years and this supports their learning and development well.
- Teaching is effective and helps children make strong progress and achieve well. One child was observed working with a teacher making good progress preparing a rice crispy cake for Easter. The child carefully counted out and placed three mini eggs on to each one in preparation for baking.
- The staff team ensure effectively that children are safe in early years through the regular and stringent checks they carry out in the classroom and outside, as well as through undertaking appropriate training and regular updates.

## 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>	114146
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	453369

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>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	191
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ceilia Turnbull
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jennifer Watt
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 September 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01429 820280
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