

# Thomas Harding Junior School

Fullers Hill, Chesham, Buckinghamshire, HP5 1LR

**Inspection dates** 11–12 March 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Leaders, including governors, have brought about significant improvements in teaching and achievement during the last two years. Pupils are now making good and often faster progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching is consistently good across the school and there is some that is excellent. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and great enthusiasm for teaching. They plan learning which challenges and fully engages pupils, enabling them to learn very well.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They love coming to school and have excellent attitudes to learning and a great sense of pride in their work. Pupils feel very safe because they are very well cared for. They show great respect towards adults and each other.
- Leaders have galvanised the whole school community behind a vision that only the very best is good enough. School staff are continuously striving to improve and they value the opportunities the school gives them to develop their teaching.
- The school's curriculum is well planned and gives pupils a wide range of exciting experiences. Pupils develop a thirst for learning as a result.
- Governors visit the school regularly and know the school well. This enables them to effectively challenge school leaders and contribute well to school plans.
- The school's procedures to ensure pupils are safe and secure are outstanding.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The progress of pupils who are disadvantaged, although good, is sometimes not as fast as that of their classmates, especially in mathematics.
- In subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers do not always plan well enough for the full range of ability. This slows down progress on occasions.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made 15 visits to classrooms to observe pupils' learning. Senior leaders accompanied inspectors on many of these visits. Inspectors also spent time examining pupils' work-books. They also observed other aspects of the school's work, including assemblies.
- Meetings were held with members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors, as well as with teachers and school leaders. The inspection team also met with representatives from the local authority. A telephone call was made to the executive headteacher of the pupil referral unit which a very small number of pupils attend part-time.
- Pupils took inspectors on a tour of the school. The inspectors met a group of pupils, listened to pupils read in Year 3, and spoke to Year 6 pupils about their reading. They also spoke to individuals in their classrooms about their work, and during time spent in the dining hall and on the school playground.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the entrance to the school at the end and start of the school day. They also considered the 42 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Inspectors reviewed 23 questionnaire responses from staff.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information relating to pupils' achievement, the school's self-evaluation and its plan of action. They considered records relating to behaviour and attendance and checks on teaching, as well as documents relating to safeguarding. The inspectors also considered the school's website.

## Inspection team

Martin Marsh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Thakur

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school. The school has grown in pupil numbers by a quarter during the last three years.
- Just under a third of pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children who looked after). This is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs is broadly average.
- Just over half of pupils are from minority ethnic groups. A large proportion of these are from Pakistani families. Just over a third do not speak English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The headteacher and her deputy give leadership support to local schools. The English leader is a local authority moderator for writing. The special educational needs coordinator leads a local group of leaders of this provision.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2012. In the last two years, there has been a large turnover of staff and changes in senior and middle leadership. Two teachers new to the profession were appointed in September 2013. There have also been changes to the governing body.

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

- Ensure that teaching in subjects other than English and mathematics is planned more precisely for the range of different abilities so even more pupils make outstanding progress.
- Raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils, especially in mathematics, so their progress is as good as that of their peers.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Since her appointment, the headteacher's inspiring leadership has significantly improved the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils. Both are now good and improving strongly. A local authority review commissioned by the governors shortly after her appointment assessed many aspects of the school's work as requiring improvement. That this is no longer the case shows the school's strong capacity to improve further.
- The whole school community – pupils, staff and parents – are highly supportive of school leaders. 'I am proud and privileged to work for a headteacher who is so clear about what she wants for the school' was typical of many responses from staff. Pupils love coming to school, take enormous pride in what they do, and respond to the outstanding care they are shown by behaving exceptionally well.
- Schools plans for the future are based on an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders at all levels are involved in checking that plans are on course to meet the challenging targets that are set for pupils.
- Teachers value the many opportunities they get to reflect on their teaching through the regular checks that are made by leaders. The school enables teachers to receive the training and support they need to improve their work. Appraisal systems are rigorous, and leaders and governors ensure that teachers' pay is linked to their performance. These factors, together with the culture of high expectations that leaders demand, are bringing about improvements in the overall quality of teaching.
- Subject leaders have excellent knowledge of their individual subjects. They have made significant contributions to ensuring the new national curriculum is fully in place and meets the statutory requirements. They check regularly on the impact of their work and have a good understanding of what needs to be done to ensure the curriculum and the quality of teaching in their subject continue to improve.
- The school strives hard to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for learning. Leaders make regular checks on pupils' progress and ensure that assessments are accurate. A range of successful interventions are put in place to help pupils who are falling behind. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are well supported to take a full part in school life and learn well. In the last two years, school leaders, including governors, have ensured that funding for disadvantaged pupils is much more carefully targeted to their needs. As a result, the gap between them and their classmates is now closing more quickly.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of memorable experiences. During the inspection, the school had an 'Enterprise Week' in which pupils had to design something to sell at a 'trade fair' at the end of the week. Pupils in Year 6 designed a range of bird feeders. They used their mathematics skills to decide on a selling price and wrote persuasive adverts to encourage people to buy their products. They also had to design and make the bird feeders. This resulted in a high degree of pupil motivation and excellent learning across the curriculum. Evidence of the exciting curriculum is on view around the school. For example, papier-mâché long-boats hang from classroom ceilings, giant mammoth heads are displayed on walls, and excellent art displays are to be found in every corridor.
- British values underpin the school's aims. Each month a core British value (selected from the acronym 'ASPIRE' - Achievement, Success, Potential, Independence, Respect, Equality) is celebrated in assemblies and within the work in classrooms. Pupils feel listened to and understand they have a voice, showing how the school promotes democracy. The curriculum provides very well for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development, which contributes to the harmonious school community and pupils' outstanding behaviour. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education and for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders rigorously check on the attendance, progress and behaviour of pupils who attend alternative provision. The provision has a good impact on pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that pupils are very safe and that all statutory requirements for safeguarding are met, including those relating to the recruitment of staff. Equal opportunities are promoted very well and pupils told inspectors that there is 'zero tolerance' of discrimination of any sort.
- The additional government funding for school sport is used well. The funding has increased the range of after-school clubs and attendance at these is good. Pupils also benefit from a specialist teacher of physical education. At playtimes, adults run organised sporting activities that fully engage pupils. During the first day of the inspection, over a third of pupils were engaged in after-school activities with an aerobic element. Pupils understand how getting involved in sport can keep them healthy.
- The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust has provided support on behalf of the local authority in helping the school improve. Staff and governors have attended a range of courses and workshops that have helped

them make a good contribution to improvements in leadership and teaching.

#### ■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors provide effective support and have a good understanding of their role. They understand the information school leaders provide on pupils' performance. They regularly visit the school to meet with school leaders. They also meet with pupils and look at their work. As a result, they know how well the school is doing relative to others, and make useful contributions to the school's plans to move the school to outstanding.
- Governors are aware of the quality of teaching and how it is improving. They are also aware that the attainment of disadvantaged pupils is not high enough and know what is being done to close the gap more rapidly. They have recently appointed a governor to be a 'champion' for this group.
- Governors ensure finances are managed appropriately and that resources are apportioned fairly. They ensure that teachers' pay is linked to their performance through the appraisal system.

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

### **Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils take an enormous pride in their school and say they love what the school does to help them learn well. Parents who responded to Parent View or who were spoken to by inspectors are very positive about how well behaved pupils are. All indicated how happy their children were at school.
- In lessons, pupils show a real thirst for learning and delighted in talking to inspectors about their work. They respond enthusiastically to questions and work very hard, rarely failing to complete what they are asked to do. They always dress very smartly in their school uniform, and show courtesy and respect when speaking to each other or to adults.
- Pupils willingly contribute to the school community. Many aspire to be members of the school council. They write their class assemblies which they rehearse in the school playground. A pupil does not have to sit for very long on the 'friendship bench' before another pupil will come and sit and talk to them or invite them into their games. Around school, pupils take responsibility for the environment, taking care of play equipment and making sure there is no litter. They move around school with consideration for others, prepared to open doors for adults and let them pass through first.
- A very few pupils have behaviour issues. The school manages any rare occasions of poor behaviour extremely well so there is not even low-level disruption in lessons. There are some notable examples where pupils' behaviour over time has improved considerably through the school's actions.
- Attendance is above average and improving and pupils are typically punctual for school.

### **Safety**

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school does everything possible to ensure that pupils are safe. All the parents who responded on Parent View agreed that their children are well looked after and are kept safe.
- All staff regularly receive training in how to recognise signs of possible child abuse. All aspects of child protection are taken extremely seriously and procedures are very rigorous.
- The arrangements for visitors to enter the school have improved still further due to the re-designed reception area. Visitors are not allowed to move around the school unaccompanied unless they have the appropriate authorisation. Checks on all aspects of health and safety are rigorous and any potential risks quickly minimised or eliminated.
- Bullying is almost non-existent. Evidence of the impact of the school's curriculum aimed at eliminating any bullying are to be seen all around the school. Each child has designed an anti-bullying message on the back of a paper plate and these are all displayed around the school's corridors. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the potential dangers of bullying through electronic media, including mobile phones. The high priority the school places on e-safety ensures that all pupils know how to stay safe on the internet. The 'green umbrella' in every classroom signifying protection when online is a continuous reminder to pupils to be vigilant.
- The school has a zero tolerance of the use of prejudice-based language. The pupils say that such incidents are extremely rare. Pupils of different faiths and cultures work and play together exceptionally well. A high value is placed on tolerance and respect for all, shown in the school's highly successful fostering of good relationships and tackling discrimination.

**The quality of teaching** is good

- All teaching is characterised by excellent relationships between pupils and teachers. Teachers' strong subject knowledge enables them to provide a wide range of activities which engage pupils' interest and often inspire them.
- Teachers have an enthusiasm for teaching which infects the pupils with a desire to learn. Every effort is made to ensure the learning has a context. Often it is linked to a book the pupils are studying or to another subject they are learning about. A display of writing entitled 'Zoo Watch Report' showed good examples of how a visit to a local zoo was followed up in the pupils' writing.
- Reading is taught well. Those pupils who are not confident readers when they start in Year 3 are given excellent support. They build quickly on what they already know about letters and the sounds they make (phonics) from previous schools. Teachers are excellent role models for reading; for example, displays show pictures of school staff reading in a variety of unusual places. Pupils take full advantage of their teachers' recommendations of challenging books for them to read. 'I think everyone in school loves reading' was one pupil's observation. In every classroom, displays of books on the topics the pupils are studying are carefully displayed.
- Frequent opportunities are provided for children to write in a range of different contexts and subjects. The clear feedback pupils receive gives them good guidance as to how they can improve. Pupils routinely correct their mistakes and respond to their teacher's comments which contribute well to their learning. They are taught the skills of writing very well.
- Mathematics is also taught well. Pupils confidently apply their calculation skills when solving problems. There is a strong emphasis on pupils setting out their calculations carefully and showing their working out. This enables teachers to identify errors and helps pupils to correct their work. Teachers always insist on neatness and accuracy, as seen when pupils draw their geometrical shapes using a sharp pencil and a ruler.
- In English and mathematics, pupils are given an appropriate level of challenge, the work being well matched to their different levels of ability. In some other subjects, there are times when work is not so well planned for the full range of ability and this occasionally slows down the progress of some pupils.
- When homework is set, it is marked well, which makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Most parents who responded on Parent View believe that homework is appropriate for the age of the pupils. They are also correct in their belief that their children are well taught.
- Additional adult staff support pupils well in lessons, particularly those who are disabled or have special educational needs. They understand what the pupils are expected to learn and use good questions to support and deepen learning. They also provide good additional help for pupils in the range of interventions which help pupils who are falling behind or need a boost to their learning.

**The achievement of pupils** is good

- For the last two years, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics has been above the national average overall. All but a small number of pupils reach national averages at the end of Year 6 on Key Stage 2 national tests, and an above-average proportion attain higher than this. As pupils enter the school broadly in line with national averages, this represents good progress overall. A significant proportion of pupils make more rapid progress. Inspection evidence indicates that progress is improving strongly.
- Pupils achieve particularly well in reading. Good teaching and the strong promotion of reading ensure that nearly all pupils are confident readers by the time they leave Year 6. They are able to enjoy challenging novels, and confidently use books and electronic media to research topics.
- Most pupils are able to calculate confidently and quickly, both in their heads and on paper. They confidently apply these skills to solve a wide range of problems.
- The most able make good progress and are regularly given challenging activities. All pupils in Year 6 last year who were Level 3 when they entered the school attained Level 5, with an above-average proportion reaching Level 6 in mathematics.
- In the 2014 Key Stage 2 statutory assessments, disadvantaged pupils made slower overall progress than their classmates between Years 3 and 6. This was because of slow progress when they were in Year 3 and Year 4, when additional funds were not as carefully allocated as they are now. Their progress in Year 5 and Year 6 helped them catch up significantly, although the very low starting points of a significant number meant there was a gap when compared to their classmates and pupils nationally. Disadvantaged pupils' attainment was less than a term behind of that of other pupils nationally in writing and about over two terms in reading and mathematics. Compared to their classmates, their attainment was about six

months behind in writing, a year behind in reading and over four terms in mathematics. The school's assessment information indicates that the gap is closing quickly and they are making more rapid progress, especially in reading and writing. Although still good, their progress is still a little slower in mathematics.

- Pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs are given good additional support to enable them to make the same good progress as their classmates. Pupils from Pakistani families, those from other minority ethnic groups and those pupils whose first language is not English also make good progress. The excellent work the school does to develop pupils' speaking skills supports all pupils, particularly those who might not speak English at home.

## 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>	110305
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	453241

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	239
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sue Jordan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Jan Burgess
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	12 November 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01494 782211
<b>Fax number</b>	01494 786098
<b>Email address</b>	office@thomasharding.bucks.sch.uk

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