

# Thornton Primary School

Main Street, Thornton, Coalville, LE67 1AH

**Inspection dates** 29–30 April 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
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

- Too few pupils are making good progress in writing and mathematics.
- The additional funds, to help disadvantaged pupils to catch up with other pupils, have not been used effectively. The gaps in attainment have widened and are not reported correctly on the academy website.
- Until recently, governors have not held leaders to account for the performance of all groups of pupils.
- Not all pupils have positive attitudes to learning or take full advantage of the opportunities open to them.
- Teaching, although improving, is not yet ensuring that all groups of pupils make good progress.
- Expectations of what pupils can achieve are not consistently high.
- The work the teachers set for pupils does not always build rapidly enough on what they already know and are able to do.
- Action plans to bring further improvement are focused on the right areas but the criteria against which leaders and governors can measure success are not sharp enough.

### The school has the following strengths

- The academy is improving. The headteacher, with the full support of the staff, has taken very positive steps towards building a culture of high expectation where pupils can achieve well.
- The governors have recently reorganised their structure. They have a realistic view of the academy's performance and are now well-focused on improving it.
- Pupils, and staff, say that behaviour has improved because of a clear system of rewards and sanctions introduced by the headteacher.
- The academy has good arrangements to keep pupils safe. The pupils say they feel safe and their parents agree.
- The children make a good start to school life in the well-led and managed early years class.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning and teaching in all seven classes. He was accompanied by the headteacher. The inspector examined pupils' work, spoke with them in lessons and heard some pupils in Year 2 read. The inspector also visited the playgrounds and talked to pupils to gain their views.
- The inspector reviewed a range of documents, including the academy's plans for improvement and policies about keeping pupils safe. He also examined a range of data about pupils' progress.
- The inspector held discussions with teachers, the headteacher and five members of the governing body.
- The views of 40 parents from the Parent View website were analysed. The views of teaching and non-teaching staff were analysed through 21 returned questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Christopher Parker, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Thornton Primary School converted to become an academy school in October 2013. When Ofsted last inspected its predecessor school, of the same name, it was judged good.
- Pupils will leave the academy at the end of Year 6 for the first time this year. Previously pupils left at the end of Year 5.
- This is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The pupils are taught in seven single-age classes.
- The children in the early years attend Reception full time.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority) is in line with the national average.
- The headteacher took up the post in September 2014.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, deepen their skills, knowledge and understanding in writing and mathematics by:
  - ensuring expectations of what pupils can achieve, and the way in which they present their work, are consistently high
  - setting pupils appropriately challenging tasks that build on what they already know and are able to do
  - continuing to develop positive attitudes to learning so that all pupils benefit from the opportunities the academy offers.
- Ensure action plans to bring further improvement have explicit timescales and sharp, measurable criteria against which leaders and governors can evaluate success.
- Improve the academy website so that it provides parents with all of the required information and correctly evaluates the impact of the pupil premium funding on disadvantaged pupils' attainment compared to that of others.

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

An external review of the academy's use of the pupil premium 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

- The academy has not given disadvantaged pupils the opportunity to achieve as well as other pupils. In the past, the pupil premium was not 'ring-fenced' and disadvantaged pupils did not feel the full benefit of it. As a result, the gap in their attainment widened, compared with that of other pupils. Plans are now in place to make full use of pupil premium funds to raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils.
- The academy's plans for improvement in key subjects set out clearly where improvements are needed. While the actions are evident, the criteria against which the headteacher, subject leaders and governors can monitor and measure success are not sharp enough.
- Teachers who lead subjects are keen to take on the extra responsibilities that the headteacher has given them. They feel they now have the authority, support and time to improve the quality of teaching and raise attainment. However, the steps they have taken so far have yet to have a marked impact on pupils' attainment.
- The headteacher has brought about improvements over the last six months, particularly in behaviour. She is building a culture of high expectations of behaviour and achievement but this is not yet fully established. The headteacher's realistic evaluation that, 'there is a lot to do', her plans for the future and the strong support of staff for what she has set out to achieve, indicate that the academy is well placed to improve quickly.
- Arrangements to check each teacher's work are central to improving the academy's performance. The headteacher has set targets for the teachers that align with the academy's priority to improve rapidly the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Pay awards are now dependent on successful teaching leading to faster progress for pupils.
- The curriculum, although not yet ensuring all groups of pupils make good progress, has been enhanced and extended by a range of sports clubs and visits to places of interest. Pupils enjoy these visits but they do not always capitalise on them through follow-up activities that deepen their understanding.
- The academy effectively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Cultural development has a high priority throughout the academy, and this broadens pupils' horizons, increases their awareness of the faiths and beliefs of others and prepares them well for life in modern Britain. A programme of personal, social and health education is developing pupils' understanding of important values such as equality and diversity. Discrimination is not tolerated and 'respect' has a high profile throughout the school.
- Funding to provide more sport for pupils is used well to extend the range of opportunities that the academy offers. A broader range of sports clubs is now available for pupils. Many more pupils attend sports clubs and are involved in competitive matches with other schools. A sports coach works alongside teachers to develop knowledge as well as the pupils' physical skills, which are benefiting, as a result. They demonstrated this very clearly in the conclusion to a Year 2 dance lesson, where they performed a routine they had developed.
- The academy receives support from the Symphony group of schools. This is proving particularly helpful in establishing a new assessment system. The academy also buys the support of an educational consultant. This has been beneficial in helping the headteacher and governors to evaluate the academy's current strengths and weaknesses.
- The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe are effective and meet statutory requirements. The designated safeguarding leader has completed updated training this year and background checks on all adults who work in the school take full account of the latest guidance.

### ■ The governance of the school:

- Governance has not been effective enough in holding the academy to account. Governors are now acutely aware that some groups of pupils, particularly those supported by the pupil premium, have not made sufficient progress to catch up with their classmates. The academy website, which does not meet requirements, contains an analysis of the impact of the pupil premium based on comparisons with the pupils entitled to free school meals, nationally. This creates a misleading picture of the impact of pupil premium funds which are intended to help disadvantaged pupils catch up with other pupils.
- Governors have reorganised their committee structure and reviewed how they work with the academy. They are now challenging the academy to improve its performance. However, they acknowledge that the current situation is 'work in progress'. They are extending their knowledge in, for example, the analysis of data and the requirements for pupils' health and safety. They have set the headteacher's performance targets and know that performance management of all staff is carried out. Governors increasingly conduct focused visits to the academy so that they know about the quality of teaching and are in a stronger position to deal with any underperformance in teaching should it be necessary.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although most pupils are ready to learn and say they enjoy lessons, attitudes to learning are not consistently positive. Not all of the older pupils are grasping the opportunities the teachers are providing for them to boost their attainment in extra classes outside the normal school day. In addition, a few pupils have to be reminded to give their full attention when their teacher is speaking.
- The pupils say that in most classes interruptions to learning are rare but some older pupils expressed concerns that their concentration is sometimes broken by the behaviour of others. The academy has recently appointed a pastoral leader to work with those pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Early indications are that the programmes he is leading are making a difference. He is closely monitoring the progress made in improving these pupils' behaviour. However, it is too soon for the academy to evaluate the impact on their academic progress.
- Pupils say that behaviour has improved noticeably this year. They, and their teachers, appreciate the changes made by the headteacher and welcome both the sanctions and rewards that are now in place. The pupils are polite and respond quickly to instructions from adults. The academy's records show that incidents of poor behaviour have fallen through the course of the current school year.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Checks to make sure that adults are able to work with children are carried out thoroughly. Staffs have completed up-to-date safeguarding training and all have signed to say they have read the Department for Education document, '*Keeping Children Safe in Education*'.
- In discussion, pupils said that they feel safe in school and on the playground. All of the parents who responded to the Parent View questionnaire agreed that their child feels safe at school. Pupils said that bullying and name-calling are rare, and this is confirmed by the academy's log of incidents of bullying. Pupils know about the different forms that bullying can take and what they should do if they are worried or concerned by the actions of other pupils. They have lessons to remind them what to do to remain safe on the internet and the steps to take should they experience cyber bullying.
- Attendance has improved. In 2014, the incidence of persistent absence fell sharply. As a result, overall attendance rose to be just above the national average. Pupils say they like school and are proud to attend this academy. They point to visits to places of interest, including residential visits, and more opportunities to participate in sports clubs as improvements that have increased their enjoyment.

**The quality of teaching** requires improvement

- Teaching, over time, has not ensured that all groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and the most able, make good progress. Pupils' learning does not always build rapidly enough on what they already know and are able to do, particularly in writing and mathematics. The headteacher holds regular meetings with teachers to identify pupils who are not achieving as well as they should. She has set all teachers a target to close the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils.
- Teachers recognise the need to raise their expectations of what pupils can achieve. This has come about through the challenge of the headteacher, the training they have attended this year and reflections on their own practice. The subject leaders acknowledge that work is not always at the right level to ensure that all groups of pupils make rapid progress.
- Pupils are increasingly reflecting in their work their teachers' heightened expectations of neat presentation. However, not all pupils' work is as neat as it could, and should, be. Too many pupils do not hold their pen or pencil correctly and for some this hinders the way they form their letters and the fluency of their writing.
- Some of the work in pupils' books illustrates the inconsistencies that have a limiting effect on their progress. Some tasks, set by teachers, deepen the pupils' understanding and extend their skills. However, they complete other tasks rather superficially without the challenge to extend their learning and accelerate their progress.
- The teachers question the pupils thoughtfully in order to extend their understanding. For example, in a science lesson the teacher questioned pupils enthusiastically about the importance of modern science, the role of some female scientists and the impact of their work on our lives. However, the subsequent activities did not capitalise on an interesting lesson so that the pupils could make rapid progress.
- Marking has improved considerably over the last six months. Scrutiny of samples of the pupils' work shows that the guidance that they receive on how to improve their work has an increasingly sharp focus. The pupils say that their learning is benefiting positively from their teachers' comments and from having clear targets that show what they need to learn next.
- Reading has a positive profile within the school. There are, for example, displays about authors and a good range of fiction and non-fiction books prominently displayed in classrooms. When Year 2 pupils were reading they did so with confidence, and successfully used their knowledge of letter sounds to read unfamiliar words.

**The achievement of pupils** requires improvement

- Too few pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects. They do not build, as effectively as they should, on the good start made by children in the early years. Although, making the progress expected of them, in each year throughout the academy pupils fall a little short of what they could achieve. Over the course of both Key Stages 1 and 2, this results in some pupils not reaching the standards of which they are capable.
- The results of national tests in 2013 and 2014, at the end of Year 2, were broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is the first year that the academy has Year 6 pupils. There is no published data available to make comparisons with the national picture. However, it is evident, from the information that the academy collects about pupils' progress, that their progress in writing and mathematics is not as fast as it is in reading, during Key Stage 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils have not made enough progress. Too many of them have not kept up with their classmates. At the end of Year 2, in 2014, the gap between the standards reached by disadvantaged pupils and those achieved by their classmates, and other pupils nationally, was wider than in previous years. The information the academy collects about pupils' attainment and progress shows that the gaps

between these pupils and others are often too wide.

- The level of challenge posed for the most-able pupils is not yet consistently at the right level. Work in pupils' books shows that there are occasions where tasks set for these pupils challenge them to think hard. However, these are sometimes followed by work that does not reflect the depth of study expected of the most-able pupils. Consequently, their progress fluctuates and is not as rapid as it should be.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies. While some pupils have made small steps forward, others have made sufficient progress so that they no longer need extra support. Training for those who work closely with these pupils has focused on making sure that they receive the right amount of support and challenge to allow them to tackle tasks on their own. As a result, these pupils are now making the progress expected of them.
- The good grounding in phonics (the sounds linked to letters) underpins the faster progress the pupils make in reading. The results of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1, in 2014, show that a higher proportion of pupils reached the expected standard than was the case in schools nationally.
- Positive steps, taken over the last six months, are bringing about improvements. The headteacher's drive to raise expectations and generate greater challenge for pupils is increasingly evident in pupils' work. In addition, some pupils are taking part in extra lessons outside of the school day to help them reach higher levels of attainment.

### The early years provision

is good

- The provision for the early years is well organised and skilfully managed. The early years leader, and the adults who work with her, create a wide range of interesting activities that make good use of both the indoor and outdoor areas. This was very evident whether the children were 'working' in the garden centre or taking the 'hot seat' as Jack, or his mother, to answer the questions of other children as part of their work about Jack and the Beanstalk. 'Thornton Thursdays' make very effective use of visits in the local area and of visitors, such as the farmer and his tractor. The early year's leader takes appropriate steps to keep children safe.
- The adults keep comprehensive records of their assessments of the children's progress. They identify what the children need to learn next and create good opportunities for them to do so. Links with parents are strong. Learning journals, which include frequent contributions from parents, provide a detailed record of each child's good progress.
- Children in the early years make a good start to their education. Children start school with the skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They settle well into the routines of school life. They behave well and share, play and work together harmoniously. A higher proportion of the children who left the early years last year, reached a good level of development than was the case nationally.
- Children, currently in the early years, are making good progress through activities led by adults and those that they choose themselves. Phonics (the sounds that letters make) is well taught. Most of the children are reading words and phrases. Many of the children are writing simple sentences and using their knowledge of letter sounds to spell simple words correctly.

## 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>	140253
<b>Local authority</b>	Leicestershire
<b>Inspection number</b>	450351

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>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	135
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Brian Gratton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michele King
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected as an academy
<b>Telephone number</b>	01530 230250
<b>Fax number</b>	01530 231932
<b>Email address</b>	headteacher@thornton.leics.sch.uk

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