

Thorndon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Thorndon, Eye, IP23 7JR

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
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.

- Leaders have successfully tackled weaker teaching in partnership with local schools and the local authority. Teaching is improving strongly and achievement is rising.
- Improvements in teaching are leading to good progress across the school. The vast majority of pupils attain in line with the national average at the end of Year 2. Most reach standards that are typical for their age at the end of Year 6.
- Pupils behave well. Adults make sure that their high expectations are met.
- The school is a warm and friendly community at the heart of the local village. Pupils feel safe and secure. Their positive attitudes towards school contribute strongly to this cohesive community.
- The school rightly prides itself on the care given to pupils' health and well-being. Pupils who need extra help and support are well looked after and thrive as a result.
- A rich and stimulating curriculum, which makes the best use of the local village, makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and academic development.
- The school is highly effective in promoting the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which prepares them well for life in modern Britain.
- Children make good progress in Reception. They are well prepared for Year 1 as they are taught alongside these older pupils, and make an early start to the new curriculum. Children's skills are developed quickly as their confidence grows.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Guidance which tells pupils how to improve their work is sometimes missing or not clear enough. Some pupils make less progress in writing and mathematics as a result.
- Teachers do not always stretch pupils' learning by asking them to write at length in subjects other than English.
- Opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills are too infrequent.
- A small number of pupils miss too much school and do not catch up in their work with their peers.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all of the classes. All but one of these observations was carried out with the headteacher. The inspector also made a number of other short visits to classrooms and attended an assembly in the local church.
- The inspector heard pupils read, and looked at writing and mathematics work from each class, much of this with the headteacher.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan and records on behaviour, safety and attendance. He also looked at information on individual pupils' progress and anonymised records of teachers' performance, and records of meetings held by the governing body.
- The inspector met with pupils, interviewed a sample of staff, and spoke to parents. He also spoke to members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The views of parents were obtained through the school's surveys and the 26 responses to the on-line Parent View survey. Written comments from one parent and 14 members of staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Brian Netto, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thorndon is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. Around one pupil in 11 is from Traveller families.
- Pupils are taught in three mixed-age classes. Children attend the Reception class full time.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils looked after by the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is just above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has increased in size by around a third. Two out of the three class teachers have changed. There has been significant building works.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to write at length when they are learning about other subjects
 - making sure that the school's marking guidance is used consistently in each classroom so that pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and they act on this advice
 - giving pupils further opportunities to demonstrate their fluency in using and applying mathematical skills.
- Improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent so that gaps in their achievement are closed in reading, writing and mathematics, by working more closely with parents including those who travel for part of the year.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders, including governors, have worked very effectively in partnership with local schools to improve teaching. Senior leaders have created a climate in which pupils achieve and behave well. Headteachers in the partner schools work together to check on teaching and share the best practice. As a direct result, teaching is improving strongly and pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics are accelerating.
- The school is at the heart of the local community. Regular use is made of the local church, village hall and forest. This has helped to build strong and effective relationships with parents and make this a vibrant and cohesive school community.
- Teaching is improving because the headteacher has introduced robust procedures for checking its quality. Training and support are provided to all staff to develop their skills and improve their performance. As a consequence, staff morale is high and teaching continues to improve.
- Teachers have devised effective systems to help them assess how well pupils are doing. These systems are used across the local network of schools. Checks are made between schools so that accurate assessments are made.
- Teachers with additional responsibilities use assessment information well to help identify staff professional development and highlight any pupil who is in danger of falling behind so they can take appropriate action to provide the extra help pupils need to catch up. Similarly, these teachers also support other colleagues with their training needs by sharing the most effective teaching.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. They play an active role in village events such as the marking of Remembrance Day. Teachers enable pupils to link up with schools in different locations and learn about lifestyles and faiths different to their own. Studying British heroes, such as Paula Radcliffe completing a marathon, inspire them to adopt values shared by the wider community. During the inspection pupils were preparing to stand for school council elections helping them to understand democratic values.
- Teachers prepare activities which strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils learn to take calculated risks and to develop a sense of awe and wonder by undertaking tasks in the 'forest school'. Such activities help pupils to acquire new skills, develop the ability to think and act for themselves, as well as learn to show respect for nature. Weekly yoga sessions also contribute strongly to the promotion of pupils' health and well being, and provides excellent support for pupils who need extra help.
- The school shows its strong commitment to equal opportunities by the way that it ensures that all groups of pupils achieve well. The exceptional provision for supporting disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs ensures that they are fully included in all that the school offers.
- The pupil premium is spent effectively so that disadvantaged pupils can benefit from all activities, including residential school trips. Additional support is provided in class and some benefit from one-to-one support. As a result, these pupils achieve as well as their peers.
- The primary physical education and sports premium is used in innovative ways to promote the health and well-being of the pupils. Along with the forest school and yoga, pupils experience a wide range of sports taught by specialist teachers. Staff are suitably trained enabling this provision to be sustained.
- Parents overwhelmingly support the school. They appreciate the opportunities to discuss important matters at the regular forum and agree that the school provides a safe and nurturing environment for all its pupils, whatever their needs.

- The local authority has provided intensive support and brokered further help and guidance from a 'challenge partner'. Alongside the partnership with the local network of schools, leaders have gained a more accurate appreciation of the school's performance. Teachers have benefited from regular opportunities to visit other schools and take part in training alongside other teachers. As the school has improved, the local authority support has reduced.
- The school has comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding which fully meet current requirements. Staff are fully informed and effective in carrying out their roles in the protection of children.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have taken a strategic oversight of the school, benefiting from the support given by the local authority and the network of local schools. For example, they are closely involved in the expansion of the school and in redesigning the accommodation to reflect the changing needs of the school. As a consequence their leadership and effectiveness has improved significantly.
 - Governors have sharpened their monitoring roles so that they combine a well-informed understanding of the school's performance with direct confirmation of effective teaching. They make sure that teachers' pay and progression is suitably rewarded and linked to the progress of pupils.
 - They make effective use of a wide range of evidence to help them understand how well pupils are achieving compared with others nationally. This helps them to look more closely at different groups of pupils and ensures greater accountability.
 - Individual governors have close links to particular areas of the school such as special needs. They use this knowledge to ask challenging questions of leaders, and this helps to ensure that additional funding benefits the pupils to the maximum.
 - Visits each term to check on health and safety procedures together with an annual safeguarding audit enables governors to keep a close check on the school. Rigorous systems ensure that all statutory requirements are met, and careful checks made so that only suitably qualified staff are recruited.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are keen to learn and fully engage in all activities. This is reflected in their work which is presented with care. They respond well to adults who they respect, and mix well with their peers across the age range.
- Pupils behave well around the school. They are polite and respectful towards visitors, and show a great deal of kindness to each other, especially to pupils who are new to the school. Their behaviour is sometimes exemplary, for example, in assemblies.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They know how to avoid cyber bullying and are quick to report any worries they have when using the internet. Pupils show respect towards each other and say that hurtful or racist language is not tolerated in the school. They say that bullying rarely happens, but when it does, adults take these incidents very seriously and help them to resolve their differences.
- Pupils' well-being is paramount to the school. When needed, pupils can seek respite in the multi-sensory 'Apollo' room, and enjoy the quiet of the 'Sanctuary' garden. This helps pupils' emotional development and contributes to the good behaviour around the school.
- Occasionally, a few pupils lose concentration in lessons and as a result, their progress slows.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are adept at safety measures, making good use of their road safety skills on their regular visits to the village. They all develop an effective understanding of risk during 'forest school' sessions, and say that they trust adults to keep them safe.
- The school ensures that the site is secure. There are effective procedures for checking staff suitability

using the government's recent guidance.

- Although attendance in 2014 was below the national average, it is now rising. The numbers of pupils who are regularly absent is reducing. Some pupils from Traveller backgrounds miss school when they are travelling during the year. Teachers set pupils work whilst they are away to help them catch up with their peers. However, this has been effective for some but not all of the pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers and teaching assistants have very positive relationships with the pupils. They have high expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour so that over time progress is good.
- Teachers enable pupils to develop their writing skills by making effective use of different genres and literary techniques such as simile and metaphor. Redrafting work hones the pupils' writing skills, as seen in the improvements made when one pupil edited his writing of the 'impenetrable dark room'. During a poetry workshop, another described from experience 'the dusty ground between the caravans and the shouts of children playing.'
- Teachers however provide insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their extended writing skills for example when learning about the past or describing a scientific experiment. As a result, their writing skills in these subjects are not as well developed as they are in their literacy lessons.
- Reading is strongly promoted in the school. The newly refurbished library has a wide range of books to choose from, and pupils enjoy the weekly whole school reading session. Pupils regularly read at home, and even those who find reading difficult use their knowledge of phonics (letters and their sounds) to help them recognise words.
- Calculation skills are taught effectively so pupils build on their knowledge. In the Reception and Year 1 class for example, a variety of practical activities and well-chosen resources helped pupils to develop skills in doubling numbers and identifying multiples of two, five and 10. Pupils practised their skills using small bricks, in sand, and on laptop computers, making good progress in their understanding of numbers.
- However, sometimes pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to practise mathematical skills and apply them to different challenges in order to develop greater mastery. This means that some pupils do not develop their understanding in mathematics to any great depth.
- Teachers give detailed feedback so pupils know what they need to do to improve their work. However, this has not always been consistent though across each class. Some pupils are not told what they need to do to improve, and teachers do not always make sure pupils act on advice given.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils attained standards broadly similar to their peers nationally in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and 6 in 2014. Pupils currently in the school are making accelerated progress as teaching has improved. Consequently, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is rising.
- Pupils from different backgrounds achieve well. Only a few pupils who miss school as they travel for part of the year fall behind, so make less progress than their peers in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The results of the Year 1 check on pupils' skills in phonics were around the national average in 2014, and improved from the previous year. Pupils have good basic skills in reading and progress is good across the school.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress overall. Specially trained teaching assistants provide good support. Flexible arrangements are in place so that pupils can

move between classes and this aids their progress. Teachers are alert to their needs and set activities which provide suitable challenges. These pupils make good progress in all subjects thanks to this support and some excellent teaching.

- There were too few disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to comment on their attainment without risk of identifying individuals. However, disadvantaged pupils make good progress across the school in reading, writing and mathematics in relation to their starting points.
- The most-able pupils achieve well. These pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in line with national averages in 2014. Pupils benefit from additional teaching in writing and mathematics alongside pupils from other schools. As a result their progress is accelerating in these subjects.

The early years provision is good

- Children join Reception with skills typical for their age. In 2014 children attained a good level of development well above the national average, an improvement on the previous year. Progress is good and accelerating. As they learn alongside Year 1 pupils, they are well prepared for the next stage in learning.
- Children are given every opportunity to work outside the classroom, using the outdoor environment as well as the local forest. This is highly effective in supporting their physical and emotional development. It also helps them to feel safe in different environments.
- Children engage well with all aspects of learning. During the inspection, they dressed as aliens as part of their learning about space. They were filled with excitement as they explored the spacecraft which had landed in the school, using magnifying glasses to take a closer look. Effective questioning helped the children sustain and develop their interests.
- Children behave well because they are constantly involved in exciting and stimulating learning. They show good levels of concentration and quickly develop confidence in using a wide range of equipment, including computers.
- Close links with colleagues from other local schools helps leaders make sure that children's assessments are accurate. Records show how well children acquire new skills, and parents contribute their own observations when their child develops skills at home. This shared expertise means that leaders identify what else needs to be done to accelerate progress.

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	124745
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	462041

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	83
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Wendy Coulson
Headteacher	Tamsin Little
Date of previous school inspection	4 June 2013
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