

Thorp Primary School

Westerdale Drive, Royton, Oldham, Greater Manchester, OL2 5TY

Inspection dates 6–7 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 are ambitious for the school. They understand precisely what needs to be done to improve the school further. Their plans for improvement are very clear and are checked frequently to ensure they are working.
- Pupils make good progress from their starting points. By the end of Year 6, most pupils achieve well and reach standards that are above average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points because their needs are carefully met by good teaching.
- Provision in the early years is effective. Children make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes from starting points that are generally typical, because teaching is good and the classrooms and outside spaces are exciting places in which to learn.
- Teaching is good because most activities are carefully planned and at the right level for pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Pupils speak very highly of their school. They feel safe, behave well and treat adults and each other with kindness and courtesy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. This, together with the school council, helps to prepare pupils for life in modern democratic Britain.
- The governing body fully understands the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors hold leaders and managers to account by rigorously assessing the school's still improving performance, including the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Sometimes the quality of teaching does not ensure that all pupils always produce their best work and make consistently good progress on a daily basis.
- The marking of pupils' work is not consistently of a good standard and pupils do not always respond to their teacher's guidance.
- A number of new middle leaders are not effectively leading improvement in their areas of responsibility.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. They also observed some small-group sessions led by teaching assistants.
- Inspectors listened to some pupils from Years 2 and 6 reading.
- Inspectors analysed evidence from teachers' planning, pupils' books and classroom displays.
- Inspectors examined evidence relating to safeguarding procedures, including child protection, attendance, incidents of bullying or poor behaviour, and health and safety.
- Inspectors analysed the school's evaluation of its own performance, action plans for improvement, information on pupils' standards and progress, and documents related to checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors held meetings with: the headteacher and deputy headteacher; the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors; leaders responsible for the early years, English, mathematics and special educational needs; and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke formally to a group of pupils and informally to pupils during playtimes and in the lunch hall.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the online survey, Parent View, in conjunction with responses to the school's own very recent survey. They spoke informally to 10 parents and carers at the start of the school day. Inspectors also took account of the 12 inspection questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Andrew Morley, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

David Fann

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The school provides part-time early years provision for Nursery children. Children in Reception Year attend full time.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (funding to help raise the achievement of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority) is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- There have been significant staff changes and long-term staff absences since the previous inspection.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 6.
- A National Leader of Education (NLE) from St. Bede's Primary Academy Bolton has supported the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - eradicating the occasional instances of teaching that are not good
 - consistently providing pupils with sufficiently challenging work in all lessons
 - ensuring that pupils always take pride in, and produce, work that is the best they can do
 - teachers checking the progress that pupils are making in lessons and, if necessary, adapting what pupils are doing to accelerate their progress
 - ensuring feedback given to pupils is consistently of a high standard and developing the quality of the responses pupils make to the guidance they are offered from their teachers.
- Improve further leadership and management by building the skills of middle leaders in driving improvement, specifically by ensuring that new approaches are having the desired effect in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, supported by a capable deputy headteacher, has galvanised the staff team to ensure that there has been significant improvement regarding the issues identified at the previous inspection in June 2013. The school now provides a good quality education for all pupils, promotes equal opportunities well, tackles discrimination and fosters good relationships with all in the school community.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the performance of the school in all areas and plans for improvement are thorough. These focus on appropriate priorities with clear time limits for outcomes to be achieved. These are shared with, and understood by, all staff and governors.
- Robust systems link pupils' achievement with teachers' pay progression. The headteacher does not shy away from difficult conversations about teaching performance, enlisting the support of the local authority when appropriate. Teachers understand they are accountable for the progress pupils make and that this is linked to any increases in their pay. Rigorous performance management arrangements ensure that teachers are set challenging targets for pupils' achievement.
- Leaders make detailed and frequent use of tracking systems to identify quickly any pupils who may be falling behind. Effective support is then arranged to help these pupils to catch up.
- The senior leadership team has taken on most of the responsibilities in reviewing the progress the pupils make and the quality of teaching in the school. The headteacher is now developing a middle leadership team to take on these responsibilities. The school is providing support to key members of staff to develop in these roles. Some subject leaders are checking the quality of teaching in their particular areas of responsibility, but the middle leaders do not currently check the progress different groups of pupils make across the school.
- The school provides a rich and varied curriculum in which the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Pupils reflect on the differences between right and wrong in personal education lessons that focus on ethical values. Assemblies and the school council reinforce British values of democracy and tolerance, ensuring that pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain. Participation in a wide range of additional activities and a link with Freehold Primary School has widened pupils' cultural horizons. Visits to different places of worship extend pupils' understanding of the spiritual aspect of the Christian and other faiths.
- The government's additional primary physical education and sport funding is used well and has led to more pupils regularly participating in sport. It has been used to train the class teachers to improve their skills in teaching a range of sporting activities. Pupils' enjoyment of physical activity and teachers' competence in teaching physical education have increased as a consequence. The school participates in a whole range of inter-school sports, including football, cricket, netball and athletics.
- The pupil premium is used effectively. Senior leaders allocate this funding precisely, following careful analysis of assessment information. Booster classes support the most able and also pupils who are disadvantaged. Specialist teachers are employed when necessary. Extra adults employed to support pupils who may not regularly read at home are successful in improving reading outcomes for this group of pupils, who now make similar progress to their peers.
- The local authority provided timely and effective support for the new school leaders to ensure the dip in standards in 2013 was quickly rectified. Partnership work with a Local Leader of Education, high-quality training and opportunities for teachers to observe outstanding practice and moderate work together have meant the school has moved forward quickly and is now securely good. As a result, the local authority has been able to reduce the level of support provided.
- The school has worked hard to ensure good relationships with parents who are now very supportive. Parents appreciate being involved in supporting their children's learning in the early years. Parents who completed the online survey would recommend the school to others.
- Safeguarding systems meet statutory requirements and policies are consistently applied to ensure effective arrangements are in place.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - There have been significant changes to the governing body since the previous inspection. Governors now work together as a skilled and effective team, and offer a good range of support and challenge to leaders. Their approach of linking a governor to the main subject areas works very well. Regular meetings between link governors, leaders and coordinators mean that governors are very well informed. They have a good knowledge of the quality of teaching and learning and understand how the school tackles underperformance. They oversee performance management arrangements to ensure teachers are only rewarded for the best practice.

- Governors have a good understanding of the school's performance in relation to the national picture because they are well trained to analyse and check assessment information, including data, accurately. They are aware of how the pupil premium and primary sport funding is used and the impact this is having on pupils' achievement.
- Governors manage the budget effectively and have ensured the school is now offering good value for money. Safeguarding requirements are rigorous and meet requirements. The governing body is working hard to communicate with parents and ensure they fully understand the school's procedures and policies.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The atmosphere in the school is purposeful and encourages good behaviour for learning. Pupils work together well and inspectors were impressed with the way in which pupils support each other to succeed.
- On occasions, when the quality of teaching is less than good, pupils do not always produce their best work. At these times, pupils lack the motivation to try hard and work to their potential.
- Pupils behave very well outside classrooms, interacting constructively with adults. The school is effective in promoting positive relationships.
- Pupils take great pride in their well-equipped playgrounds. They appreciate the way that their constructive suggestions to the school council are taken seriously.
- The pupils take a significant lead in the life of the school. They take on a range of responsibilities, such as members of the school council, librarians and prefects. The older pupils understand their responsibility to model good behaviour and safe practice for the younger ones. The prefects show great maturity in their role to ensure that younger children are looked after on the playground and around school. Pupils are very caring of each other, especially at lunchtime. Pupils enjoy playtimes which are very happy and secure for all.
- Pupils understand what bullying means and believe that the number of incidents is low. They say that staff help them to overcome any disagreements quickly. This is borne out by school records that show decreasing numbers of incidents of poor behaviour over the past two years.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a very good understanding of personal safety and how to stay safe when using the internet. The school uses a range of outside agencies to make sure all the pupils' needs are met. Good community links enhance learning further.
- Pupils feel very well looked after by the adults around them and appreciate that they are well cared for. Pupils say that 'teachers here are kind and try to help us to do our best.'
- Pupils have a good awareness of personal safety, including when using the internet, because it is explained well in lessons and assemblies.
- The majority of the parents who responded to Parent View expressed the view that their children feel safe at school. This is also the case in the school's own recent survey to which a larger number of parents responded.
- Attendance rates are high because pupils enjoy coming to school. This is because they are very pleased with the activities that are provided for them.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching has improved in all phases of the school since the previous inspection and is now good. This is ensuring that, over time, pupils are making good progress and achieving well in the key skills of reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils are actively engaged and enthusiastic about their learning. For example, in a mathematics lesson pupils developed calculation skills within the context of running a restaurant. In such lessons, they are given opportunities to develop reasoning skills and to challenge ideas. Both teachers and teaching assistants use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and ensure that learning is progressing well.
- Teachers work hard to ensure that activities are well planned to match closely the needs of all pupils.

Pupils are presented with stimulating starting points and good resources to help them in their learning. Teachers use their good subject knowledge effectively and ensure that pupils are very clear about the quality of work they are expected to produce.

- There are small pockets of teaching that do not always make sure that pupils make the progress they should. At these times, teachers do not always expect enough of pupils so that they can consistently achieve well. Work does not always provide the right level of challenge for pupils. Sometimes, it is too easy, particularly for the most able.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) in the early years and Key Stage 1 is helping to improve pupils' reading and spelling. Reading is a high priority. Opportunities for pupils to develop reading skills are systematically taught and teachers frequently assess pupils' progress. Pupils enjoy reading independently and receive good support from home.
- Pupils are making good progress in their writing because they are given good opportunities and challenge when writing in other subjects, such as history.
- Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and check that pupils have responded to the advice given in their English and mathematics books. However, there is variance in the quality of marking across the school. Teachers do not consistently use the same detailed approach to marking pupils' work. Their expectations of how pupils should respond varies and, as a result, progress sometimes slows.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- As pupils are ready to learn as soon as they join Year 1, following their success in the early years, they make good progress as they move through the rest of the school. Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 in the 2014 tests were above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Reading is a strength of the school and the teaching of phonics is very successful. As a result, all pupils reached the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2014. Older pupils develop a love of reading. They use a wide range of strategies and are confident and fluent readers.
- Provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is good and these pupils make good progress from their starting points. The good support provided by class teachers, teaching assistants and outside agencies meets the needs of these pupils well. It ensures that work is set at the right level for these pupils, enabling them to make small but progressive steps in their learning.
- There are too few disadvantaged pupils to comment on their attainment in comparison to others. Assessment information and work in books show that well-targeted support and regular checking by leaders ensures that this group of pupils make good progress and there is no difference in standards in reading, writing and mathematics between these pupils and their classmates.
- The most able pupils generally make good progress due to well-planned and interesting work provided by teachers. These pupils are determined to achieve highly. Sometimes, the work set however is not hard enough to ensure that they make good progress in all lessons.
- Although progress in all the other subjects of the curriculum is similarly good, standards are variable across the school. The school does not ensure that pupils consistently take equal pride in the quality of their writing and the way they present their topic work.

The early years provision

is good

- Leadership and management of the early years provision are good. They ensure all aspects of the provision are effective. A positive, happy atmosphere prevails and so children quickly get used to the routines established by staff, who skilfully support the children in their learning.
- Children start in the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and knowledge that are generally typical for their age. Some children start school with skills below those typical, especially in speaking, reading and writing. They achieve well and make good progress from their individual starting points, and most enter Year 1 well prepared for the next stage in their learning. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is above the national average.
- The early years provides a safe and secure environment for children. The school ensures the safeguarding procedures linked to the early years provision are in place and are monitored carefully.
- Teaching is good. Staff are skilful in helping children to make good progress through a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities. Teachers use questioning very effectively to help children develop their skills and confidence in describing things about which they are learning. The children behave well

and interact well with each other and the adults who support them.

- The adults in the class check carefully the progress children make. This information is used to plan activities that develop and extend their learning further. Learning journeys provide detailed description of the progress of each child and these are used to plan their next steps in learning.
- Children develop their understanding of phonics quickly because sessions are taught effectively and are followed up by activities that enable children to build successfully on what they have learnt. The children have good opportunities to extend their learning in the Reception outdoor classroom.
- The school works closely with parents, sharing information about how well their children are developing. Parents comment that there is good communication with the adults in the Nursery and Reception classes.

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	105674
Local authority	Oldham
Inspection number	462313

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	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Suzanne Horrocks
Headteacher	Stuart Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	5 June 2013
Telephone number	0161 770 5475
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	info@thorp.oldham.sch.uk

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