

Thursfield Primary School

Chapel Lane, Harriseahead, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 4JL

Inspection dates

22–23 September 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- This school has declined since the previous inspection. Leaders rate the school as being better than it is and have not accurately identified what needs improving. They do not demonstrate the capacity to secure the improvements necessary to ensure pupils make the progress that is expected of them.
- Not all the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection have been tackled successfully.
- Leaders, including those who have responsibility for subjects, have not evaluated pupils' progress sharply enough and, as a result, improvement is patchy and not as rapid as it needs to be.
- Governors lack the information and training to hold school leaders to account. They have not ensured that statutory requirements are met.
- Teaching lacks the quality to ensure that pupils make good progress, especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not use the information they have about what pupils know and can do to plan work that matches the different abilities of students in their classes.
- Pupils' misunderstandings are not identified and corrected quickly enough, especially in writing and mathematics, and the advice they receive on how to improve their work is too variable.
- Pupils' outcomes are inadequate because not all pupils currently in the school make the progress expected of them. Many pupils do not have strong enough skills in reading, writing and mathematics to reach the standards they need as they move through the school.
- In some lessons, pupils lose attention and fail to complete work of sufficient quality because activities are not planned well enough to meet their needs.
- Early years provision requires improvement as children do not make good enough progress from their starting points. Even so, children are adequately prepared for their move to Year 1.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils feel safe in school and most parents agree that this is the case.
- The vast majority of pupils enjoy coming to school and their attendance is above national figures.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make rapid progress by making sure that:
 - teachers know how well pupils are doing and plan work that is neither too hard nor too easy
 - teachers improve pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding by giving them opportunities to reason mathematically, solve problems and to go into greater depth in each topic, both in mathematics lessons and in other subjects
 - teachers improve pupils' writing skills by securing rapid improvements in their spelling, punctuation and grammar, both in English lessons and across other subjects
 - teachers improve pupils' reading skills by ensuring that pupils understand what they have read
 - the feedback to pupils about their work helps them to know what to do to improve
 - teachers ensure pupils have the necessary learning skills, such as resilience, perseverance and problem solving, and encourage them to take control of their own learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels, including governors, by making sure that:
 - leadership roles and responsibilities are clear and unambiguous and that all staff are held to account through rigorous checks on their performance and the setting of precise targets against which their work can be assessed
 - procedures to check the work of the school are clear and understood by all, and that the information produced is carefully analysed to inform strategic plans that drive rapid improvement
 - leaders check and evaluate pupils' progress from their starting points in all year groups
 - governors have the knowledge, skills and understanding to hold leaders to account and ensure statutory requirements are met
 - senior leaders provide governors with relevant information about pupils' progress, behaviour, personal development and welfare and the quality of learning, teaching and assessment
 - governors hold leaders to account for the spending of the pupil premium grant and primary school physical education and sports funding.

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

An external review of the use of the pupil premium and school sport fund should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is inadequate

- The quality of education has declined since the last inspection. While pupils' attainment and progress showed improvement at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015, the progress of pupils currently in the school is inadequate. Leaders, including governors, have been slow to react to this decline.
- Leaders, including governors, do not demonstrate that they have the skills necessary to check on, or to evaluate accurately, the quality of education provided by the school. As a result, they have not drawn up precise priorities or sharp enough plans for action that will force improvement.
- Senior leaders and staff responsible for subject leadership and early years are unclear about their roles and responsibilities. As a result, the checks on pupils' progress and teachers' performance are inconsistent.
- Leaders do not routinely analyse and interpret assessment information. As a consequence, they are unable to identify pupils who are making good progress or those who are falling behind and need early intervention to help them catch up. Leaders have focused on pupils' attainment and have not consistently measured the progress of pupils currently in the school from their different starting points. Neither have they used these checks effectively to improve the quality of teaching and assessment.
- The systems for managing teachers' performance are inadequate. Staff are not held to account for the progress of the pupils in their classes or, where relevant, for the effectiveness of their leadership. As a consequence, staff training needs are not identified. The staff training that does take place is not effective in improving teachers' and leaders' performance. A small minority of staff believe that the school does not make appropriate provision for their training.
- A minority of parents and staff do not think that the school is well led and managed. A minority of parents also believe that the school does not respond to any concerns they raise or provide valuable information about their child's progress.
- The curriculum is not effective because the match of work to individual pupils' ability is too variable between teaching groups. Leaders have not evaluated the impact of the curriculum on pupils' development and progress.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school's mathematics curriculum reflects the National Curriculum. As a consequence, pupils have insufficient opportunities to reason mathematically, to solve problems or to apply their mathematical knowledge, skills and understanding in different subjects.
- Pupils' progress in writing is inhibited because pupils have insufficient opportunities to write extended pieces for different purposes and audiences. The school's policy on the teaching and correcting of pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar is unclear. As a consequence, pupils often make the same mistakes in their writing.
- Pupils have opportunities to read at times other than in English lessons, for example in 'ERIC' (Everyone Reading in Class) time. However, this is used inappropriately in the early years as children lose concentration and become distracted when they are expected to read for extended periods of time without help.
- Pupil premium money is not used effectively to support the learning of disadvantaged pupils. For example, significant amounts of money have been allocated for specific strategies such as one-to-one support, but neither school leaders nor governors have checked the difference these approaches have made to disadvantaged pupils' progress and attainment.
- The primary school physical education and sports funding is not used effectively. Leaders and governors have not evaluated the impact of the spending on pupils' health and fitness, participation, skill development or success in sporting competitions.
- The promotion of pupils' moral and social development through the curriculum, including assemblies, is appropriate. Pupils' conduct out of lessons contributes to a calm and purposeful atmosphere and pupils' social interaction is a positive feature of some lessons. The school actively promotes British values and pupils demonstrate these around the school. For example, boys and girls mix socially and show respect and tolerance for the views of others. However, leaders accept more could be done to develop pupils' spiritual and cultural awareness and appreciation.
- The local authority increased its level of concern for this school following the decline in outcomes in 2014, but has not acted with sufficient urgency to put in place appropriate support. Staff training has been

introduced recently but it has been ineffective in improving leaders' and teachers' performance.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- is ineffective as members of the governing body are not aware of the extent of underachievement in the school. This is because school leaders do not provide them with detailed information about the progress of different groups of pupils in all year groups. Longstanding weaknesses have not been tackled effectively. Governors do not provide sufficient challenge to school leaders to promote improvement
- has failed in its responsibility to ensure that all statutory requirements are met. For example, the school's website does not meet statutory requirements
- fails to keep a close enough check on how teachers and leaders are held to account for their work
- is not holding leaders to account for the way in which the school is spending the pupil premium funding and the primary school physical education and sports funding.

- The school's safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective. Staff training is up to date and staff have a clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe. The headteacher has had 'Prevent' training on the dangers associated with radicalisation. The vast majority of parents believe that their child is safe at school and is being taught the necessary skills to help them deal with, or avoid, unlawful or antisocial situations. The school works effectively with the local authority Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) in ensuring vulnerable children and their families are identified and supported.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- In too many lessons, teaching is too weak to ensure pupils make the necessary progress to reach the standards of which they are capable, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not use their assessment information to plan work that matches the different abilities of pupils in their classes. Weaker teaching fails to build on pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. As a result, pupils' progress is inhibited.
- Pupils' learning and progress is not checked often enough during the lesson. As a result, misconceptions and mistakes are not identified quickly and pupils often repeat the same mistakes. The advice pupils receive on how to improve their work is too variable and the feedback does not consistently help them to improve their work. A minority of pupils do not use the feedback to improve their work or complete the additional tasks set by their teacher.
- Teachers do not provide pupils with sufficient opportunities to reason mathematically, solve increasingly difficult problems or to deepen their knowledge and understanding of mathematical concepts. The work set for the more-able pupils fails to provide challenge or interest. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in subjects other than in mathematics lessons.
- Basic writing skills are not well taught. As a result of weak teaching, pupils frequently make spelling errors, do not use punctuation and grammar correctly and do not check to make sure their sentences are clear.
- The teaching of reading is inconsistent. The majority of pupils develop their reading through 'guided reading' sessions and are able to use phonics (the sounds letters make) to sound out words. However, the teaching sometimes fails to give pupils opportunities to develop their comprehension and understanding of texts.
- The most-able pupils respond enthusiastically to work that challenges them and extends their thinking. However, this effective teaching is not evident in all classes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that low attaining pupils and those who are disabled or who have special educational needs are supported appropriately in class and given effective guidance. As a result, their rates of progress are improving, with an increasing proportion making the expected progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- A significant minority of pupils are overly reliant on their teacher to guide their learning. They do not have the necessary learning skills, such as resilience, perseverance or self-awareness, to be able to take

control of their learning. As a result, they give up or are easily distracted when the work is too easy or too hard.

- The school's work to keep pupils safe is inconsistent. While older pupils are clear about how to keep themselves safe, younger pupils are not as secure in their understanding of different types of bullying and how to manage potentially dangerous situations. The school has recently begun working with pupils on the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. However, it is too early to say if this work has had a positive impact in keeping pupils safe from, for example, online radicalisation.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and are happy in their learning. Parents who spoke with inspectors agree. Staff have received appropriate training and follow correct procedures in response to any concerns they may have about individual pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- School leaders do not rigorously evaluate the records of behaviour incidents. As a consequence, they do not know if the school's actions to improve pupils' behaviour are having any impact, or how well vulnerable pupils behave, for example.
- A significant minority of pupils have to be reminded to concentrate during lessons, to stay in their seat and to complete work to an appropriate standard.
- The majority of pupils generally conduct themselves well during break and lunchtimes. This leads to a calm and purposeful atmosphere inside the school. However, playtimes can be 'boisterous'. Pupils told inspectors that this happens because there are no organised activities or equipment for them to use.
- Staff keep a close check on pupils' attendance and use a range of rewards and awards to encourage pupils to attend regularly. As a result, pupils' attendance is above national figures.
- Pupils are punctual to school in the morning and to lessons after break and lunchtime.

Outcomes for pupils

are inadequate

- Provisional test results show that pupils' attainment and progress improved at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2015 after a decline in 2014. However, the progress of pupils currently in the school is inadequate. Leaders, including governors, have been slow to react to the decline and to sustain the improvements seen in the 2015.
- Pupils lack important skills in writing and mathematics in all year groups and classes. Pupils' books show that simple errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar are common and not checked by teachers. This hinders pupils' progress. Pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical skills is limited as they do not have the capability to solve problems or the necessary resilience and perseverance to overcome difficulties. As a result, pupils' readiness for the next stage in their education is inconsistent.
- The development of pupils' reading skills is inconsistent. The vast majority of pupils are able to use phonics (the sounds letters make) to sound out words but a minority of pupils have difficulties in understanding what they have read.
- The progress of pupils who are more able is inadequate as teaching does not routinely develop their thinking skills or deepen their understanding of more difficult concepts, particularly in mathematics.
- The number of pupils who are disadvantaged, who are disabled or who have special educational needs in each year group is too small for a viable comparison to be made to their classmates or other pupils nationally.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The provision is led by a member of staff who does not teach in the Reception classes. She works hard to support staff. However, the outcomes are not always effective. This is because senior leaders do not lead and manage the early years provision rigorously enough.
- The materials and play resources that the children use are sometimes uninspiring, especially in the outdoor area. The school has identified the improvement of resources as a development point. However, leaders have not acted with sufficient urgency. As a result, there are too few opportunities for children to explore a wide enough range of activities out of doors.

- Children join the school in Reception with skills and knowledge that are typical, and in some cases above typical, for their age. They make expected rather than good progress because of inconsistencies in teaching. Overall, they are adequately prepared for Year 1 by the end of the Reception Year.
- Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan a broad range of activities. However, staff do not consistently make sure that the activities they plan are sufficiently challenging, particularly for the more-able children. As a result, children make uneven progress during the course of the year.
- Children are keen to learn. They behave well and are ready to share and take turns on the equipment. Children develop their personal and social skills well. They play together happily and are kept safe.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work together well to ensure children are safe. The classrooms, playground and corridor areas are checked daily in order to ensure that there are no potential health and safety risks.
- Parents are positively involved in their children's learning and they contribute effectively to the assessment of their child's progress by telling teachers about what their child has done at home.
- The school has worked effectively with the local authority to moderate teachers' assessments.
- There are too few children who are disadvantaged, who are disabled or who have special educational needs for a viable comparison to be made to their classmates or other pupils nationally.

School details

Unique reference number	124086
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10001225

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	306
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Paula Brammer
Headteacher	Loretta Frain
Telephone number	01782 512301
Website	www.thursfield.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@thursfield.staff.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 May 2011

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years attend on a full-time basis.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language are below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average. These pupils are supported by the pupil premium, which is additional funding provided for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including those with a statement or an education, health and care plan, is below average.
- The 2015 end of Key Stage 2 provisional results show that 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 last inspection in May 2011, a small number of staff have left the school. The headteacher has recently appointed new school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection began as a section 8 short inspection. The lead inspector deemed the short inspection a full section 5 inspection at the end of the first day.
- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 24 lessons across all year groups. The work in pupils' books was evaluated during observations. Pupils' books from the previous academic year were also scrutinised.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher, other school leaders, teachers, support staff, parents and pupils and the Chair of the Governing Body. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The views of the 39 parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered. Questionnaire responses from eight members of staff were also analysed.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's information on pupils' current progress, school improvement plans, work in pupils' books, safeguarding and child protection documents, including the checks made on staff.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils as they arrived at school, during break and lunchtimes, as they left the school premises at the end of the day and in lessons.

Inspection team

Peter Humphries, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Usha Devi	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Bates	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Amieli	Ofsted Inspector

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