

Thomlinson Junior School

The Goose Market, High Street, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 9PG

Inspection dates

17–18 May 2016

Overall effectiveness

Good

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have secured significant improvements in teaching since the last inspection. As a result, standards are rising and pupils make consistently good progress as they move through the school.
- Pupils say that they really enjoy mathematics. Their progress in this subject is particularly rapid because teachers make lessons exciting and relevant to pupils' experience and interests.
- Pupils' progress in writing has improved and is now good because teachers give pupils so many opportunities to write across many different subjects and for a range of purposes.
- Teachers are skilled in choosing activities that are relevant to pupils' own experiences and give a real purpose to their learning. This means that pupils are keen to learn and take pride in their achievements and behave well.
- Pupils are very safe in school and have every confidence that the adults in school care for them and are always willing to help. They typically comment that teachers 'think about you as a person and not just as a pupil'.
- The broad and balanced curriculum is a real strength of the school. It is rich in opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through a range of interesting trips and visits, including residential visits that support pupils' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Governors are well informed on the school's performance. They play an active part in improvement planning in addition to securing the long-term financial stability of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers sometimes give lower-attaining pupils tasks that are either too difficult to complete or not challenging enough to move them forward in their learning. Consequently, these pupils do not always make rapid enough progress to catch up with pupils of a similar age.
- Leaders do not always check whether or not short-term support arrangements to help lower-attaining pupils with gaps in their learning are working. This limits leaders' ability to intervene swiftly and try a different approach to prevent pupils from falling behind further.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes for lower-attaining pupils by:
 - making sure that teachers in all year groups give effective support to secure more rapid progress for those pupils who need to catch up with age-related expectations by the time they move on to the next phase in their education.
- Improve leadership by ensuring:
 - that the effectiveness of short-term interventions to support lower-attaining pupils with identified gaps in their learning is checked regularly
 - that leaders take prompt action to change or modify this support where this is necessary to prevent underachievement.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and governors are highly ambitious for the pupils of Thomlinson Junior School. Leaders' determined actions to improve the quality of teaching have been successful in raising standards and increasing the rates of pupils' progress.
- The headteacher has identified individual strengths in her staff and has built on these to secure a cohesive leadership team with a shared vision for the success of the school. Subject leadership is robust in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, enthusiastic leaders are developing their skills rapidly, including those for checking up on pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of teaching in lessons.
- The curriculum is a real strength of the school. Leaders ensure that pupils develop their skills across the full range of subject areas through well-planned lessons with many opportunities for practical and investigative work to extend pupils' thinking. Pupils and their parents appreciate the wide range of experiences that teachers bring to bear on their learning, for example a Spooky Science day, geography fieldwork trips and adventurous outdoor activities such as ghyll scrambling and caving.
- Professional development and training opportunities for staff are well focused and effective in improving teaching skills. Strong partnership working with other local schools, including the secondary school, is key to this success, as well as supporting pupils' transition to the next stage of their education.
- The pupil premium funding is used well to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make at least as much progress as other pupils in the school.
- The primary physical education and sport premium funding is used effectively to increase the range of sporting activities on offer and to provide professional coaching sessions.
- Leaders promote pupils' awareness of fundamental British values, including democracy and the rule of law. Pupils in Year 5 recently held their own election campaign alongside local elections, learning about persuasive arguments, freedom of speech and the importance of accepting a majority vote. Visits take place to different places of worship and this promotes pupils' understanding of, and tolerance for, different faiths and religions. Pupils' cultural development and awareness of life in modern Britain is further developed through an annual visit to London where older pupils take a trip on the Underground as well as visiting places of historic and national interest.
- Leaders have yet to fully ensure that lower-attaining pupils make rapid enough progress to catch up in their learning with other pupils in their age group. There are plans in place to address this.
- Where there are short-term interventions to support groups of pupils who are in danger of falling behind in their learning, the effectiveness is not always closely monitored. This sometimes means that leaders miss opportunities to share good practice or to act swiftly and make changes where the interventions are less successful.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is effective and governors bring a range of personal and professional expertise to the school. A recent review of governance, supported by the local authority, has developed governors' confidence in challenging leaders and in taking part in school development planning.
 - Governors understand procedures for the performance management of staff, including that of the headteacher. They ensure that the management of teachers' pay is effective in rewarding teachers for improved performance, including outcomes for pupils and for the quality of their teaching.
 - Governors ensure that the pupil premium funding and the primary physical education and sport premium funding are used effectively to secure positive outcomes for pupils. They keep a close check on the school's finances, making sure that plans for spending are linked to the correct priorities for improvement and that school buildings are safe and well maintained.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding has a high priority in the school. Staff receive appropriate training and work well with parents and outside agencies to ensure that children are protected from harm and feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have high expectations of the amount and quality of pupils' work. Pupils are expected to work hard in their lessons and their books show that they complete a great deal across the full range of subject areas.
- Teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to write at length and for a range of different purposes. The impact of this is seen in pupils' much-improved progress in writing.
- The teaching of mathematics is particularly effective. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give children real and relevant experiences that bring context to learning and deepen their understanding. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils designed their own house and had to draw and measure a floor plan so as to calculate the area and perimeter of each room. Weekly school-wide mental mathematics challenges bring in an element of competition. Children take part with enthusiasm in striving to be the winning year group.
- There are good routines in place to teach reading and develop pupils' skills in comprehension. Pupils read every day in school and teaching assistants are used well to support pupils who need a little extra help. Pupils say that they enjoy reading and frequently read at home too.
- Teachers support pupils well in developing their skills across a very wide range of subject areas, and not just in English and mathematics. For example, pupils developed their geographical skills in a Cumbrian flood project where they had opportunities to interview some of the flood victims and ask questions about the rescue operation. This brings learning to life and gives it currency. Additionally, it contributes to pupils' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.
- Pupils currently in the specially resourced provision are taught alongside other pupils in the classrooms and benefit from good teaching along with skilled support from teaching assistants.
- Marking routines are well established throughout the school. Pupils receive good guidance on how to improve their work and have frequent opportunities to respond to this by editing or correcting their work, in line with the school policy.
- Teachers generally use checks on earlier learning well to plan for activities that will develop children's understanding and help them master new skills. However, this is not always the case with some lower-attaining pupils who struggle to catch up. The work set for these pupils is sometimes too difficult for them to complete and they waste time waiting for adult support while the teacher works with other groups of learners. Equally, some tasks are insufficiently challenging to accelerate their progress and help them to catch up in their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff receive appropriate training in keeping children safe, including from the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. Systematic checks are carried out on new members of staff and regular visitors to the school. Pupils are aware of the school's security arrangements and know that they are very safe in school.
- The systems and structures in place to manage any incidents of poor behaviour are robust and are applied with fairness. Pupils appreciate this and look forward to collecting 'smiley' faces for good behaviour that count towards rewards and privileges.
- Pupils typically comment that 'teachers are by our side'. They say that the very infrequent incidents of bullying will always be dealt with appropriately and that racist or homophobic name-calling is never tolerated. Pupils say that they value people for who they are rather than what they look like or what they wear, so 'it is fine for someone to be different'.
- Attendance is broadly average and there are no significant differences in the attendance patterns of different groups of pupils. Persistent absence has been reduced over time because leaders work well with families to support them in bringing pupils in every day and on time.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are confident and happy learners. They take great pride in their school and in their achievements.

They are polite and courteous to visitors and treat one another with respect.

- The vast majority of pupils are really keen to learn. They are attentive in lessons, listen well to instructions and behave sensibly around the school buildings.
- Very occasionally, there is minor disruption to learning when the teaching does not fully engage pupils' attention, particularly that of lower-attaining pupils in afternoon sessions.
- A few pupils say that they are tired sometimes in school because they stay up very late at night and do not understand the importance of having a good night's sleep to ensure their mental and physical health and well-being.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe from harm. They are aware of e-safety and the dangers of giving out personal information on the internet. During the inspection, a visit from a national children's charity made pupils aware of the dangers of sexual exploitation and what to do if they have any concerns.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. From their individual starting points, the vast majority of pupils make good progress and leave the school with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are at least in line with or above those expected for their age.
- Historically, progress in writing was weaker than in reading and mathematics. However, inspection evidence, along with the school's own information, shows that pupils currently in school make good progress in writing. This is because there are so many opportunities for them to write at length across a wide range of subject areas and for a variety of different purposes.
- Leaders have designed the school day to allow sufficient time for teachers to develop pupils' skills across the full range of the curriculum. As a result, pupils' progress in most subjects is just as good as it is in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress in science, for example, is particularly rapid because lessons frequently involve stimulating practical investigations that motivate pupils to learn as much as they can.
- Most-able pupils are challenged well in lessons and the proportions of these pupils reaching beyond and well beyond national expectations is increasing, particularly in mathematics.
- Gaps in the learning of lower-attaining pupils are not always identified swiftly enough. As a result, not all of these pupils make rapid enough progress to enable them to catch up with other learners.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress along with their peers, and gaps in their attainment against other pupils nationally are closing rapidly.
- Similarly, pupils with special educational needs or disability, including those in the specially resourced provision, make good progress from their starting points due to skilled support for their individual needs.
- Pupils say that they do not enjoy French lessons as much as other lessons. They frequently have to complete worksheets that are not very interesting or stimulating. This limits pupils' opportunities to develop fluency in the written and spoken language.

School details

Unique reference number	112125
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10012183

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Samantha Starmer
Headteacher	Brenda Fyrth
Telephone number	01697 342432
Website	www.thomlinson.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	office@thomlinson.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 June 2014

Information about this school

- Thomlinson Junior School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The majority of children are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or a disability is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium funding is average. The pupil premium is additional government funding given to schools for disadvantaged pupils who qualify for free school meals or for children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school has a specially resourced provision with places for four pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties. There are currently three pupils accessing this provision.
- The school meets the government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school meets the requirements for publishing information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a wide range of learning activities across a range of subjects. Pupils' books from different year groups and subjects were looked at.
- Inspectors met with eight members of the governing body. A meeting was held with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils and spoke to pupils informally throughout the inspection in addition to considering 34 responses from pupils to Ofsted's online pupil survey.
- Inspectors considered parents' opinions through the 27 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and held informal discussions with parents at the end of the school day.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and other school leaders. Inspectors considered 12 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey.
- The inspection team studied information about achievement and the assessment of learning. They examined any records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at a range of other documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school's work.
- A review of safeguarding records and procedures was carried out.

Inspection team

Jan Corlett, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Lisa Crausby

Ofsted Inspector

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