

Thingwall Primary School

Pensby Road, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside CH61 7UG

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	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher leads this school with passion and determination. Her skills complement those of the deputy headteacher, senior leaders and governors well. Together they have raised aspirations and taken the school from strength to strength. As a result, standards achieved by pupils and the quality of teaching are now good.
- Pupils rarely miss a day at school. Their behaviour in all respects is outstanding. They are mature, caring and studious 'global citizens', who are proud to wear the Thingwall School uniform.
- Governors have a thorough understanding of the school's effectiveness. They are financially prudent and insist on knowing the full impact of senior leaders' and teachers' work to improve the school.
- Pupils benefit from a stimulating curriculum, with many opportunities to visit places of interest. They participate in music, art and sporting activities.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their appreciation of British values are promoted exceptionally well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know pupils well and challenge them to achieve to their very best.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) is taught well. Pupils love to read, enjoy poetry and have a good knowledge of the work of many authors.
- All groups of pupils make good and often exceptional progress. At the end of Year 6 in 2016, almost all disadvantaged pupils made more than expected progress in reading and writing.
- Standards at the end of Year 2 have gone from well below average at the time of the previous inspection to above average in all subjects.
- Overall standards at the end of Year 6 have been high for the last two years. Pupils' writing skills are exceptionally strong.
- Parents are of the view that their children are safe, well looked after and making good progress.
- All aspects of the early years provision, including teaching and children's progress, are good.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always know how to take the next steps in their learning.
- Occasionally teachers' questioning does not deepen pupils' thinking, or fully extend their knowledge.
- Provision for children to engage in outdoor learning and playing activities is not as well developed as indoor provision.

Full report

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that all pupils know what they need to do to improve their learning
 - making sure that teachers' questioning is consistently effective in deepening pupils' thinking and extending their knowledge.

- Enhance children's learning by extending the range of opportunities available for them to engage in outdoor learning and playing activities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- This is an 'outward-facing' school which is led by an ambitious headteacher and capable senior leadership team who are not afraid to share their successful work in improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Nor are leaders afraid to identify and learn from good and outstanding practice in other schools, some of which they tailor and implement in Thingwall School.
- Subject leaders, including those responsible for English, mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages, make a very effective contribution to improving the quality of teaching. All are responsible for ensuring that pupils' learning is accurately assessed and that the quality of teaching in their subject areas is at least good. Leaders regularly check on the quality of work in pupils' books, talk to pupils about their learning and report on their progress to the headteacher and governors.
- Rigorous and well-organised systems are in place to monitor the progress of pupils. These enable teachers and senior leaders to identify any underachievement and put into place additional support where it is needed.
- All teachers are accountable for pupils' performance, which forms the central basis of teachers' performance management. Teachers and teaching assistants are highly appreciative of their training and professional development and say that such opportunities, and visits to other schools, have helped to improve their teaching practice.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used highly effectively to ensure that any gaps between these pupils and their peers are continually narrowing. Senior leaders ensure that no pupil misses out on any aspect of school life, including educational visits and access to sporting activities, because of their personal or family circumstances. As a result of leaders' clear and focused plans, disadvantaged pupils made better than expected progress in reading and writing by the time they left school at the end of Year 6 in 2015. Currently, they are making at least good progress.
- Pupils benefit from an engaging curriculum which promotes their reading, writing and mathematical skills well across all subjects. Pupils' written work is exemplary. Quite rightly, pupils are rewarded for their hard work, which is celebrated in numerous displays throughout the school.
- Senior leaders' work to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils regularly raise money for good causes and support a wide range of charities. They carry out voluntary work in the community and have a deep understanding of their Viking heritage and of the importance of their links with countries such as Sweden, Norway and The Isle of Man. Pupils enjoy playing various string, woodwind, brass and percussion instruments, learning French, visiting local places of interest and participating in performing arts activities.
- Promoting British values is central to the school's work. For example, pupils' understanding of the rule of law, liberty and democracy were heightened recently through an assembly on equality and tackling racism. This was a part of the school's celebration of the European Day of Languages. Commemorations of World War One and the Queen becoming the longest-serving monarch are incorporated into the curriculum, as are themed weeks on Black history and famous British people. The school has many accolades in this area and has been recognised by the British Council for its outstanding work to develop the international dimensions of its curriculum.
- Senior leaders ensure that the primary school sports fund is used effectively to extend its range of well-attended after-school clubs for sports such as archery, cricket, golf and cheerleading. Funding has also helped to increase pupils' participation in competitive sports and inter-school competitions in football and swimming. Specialist coaches help to enhance the skills of staff in teaching various physical education activities.
- The overwhelming majority of parents who completed Parent View, submitted text messages and talked to inspectors, were highly complimentary about all aspects of the school. They are of the view that their children are happy, safe and making good progress. Typical comments included, 'This is a wonderful school, teachers and teaching assistants are excellent', 'We feel the school has a clear vision and knows how to achieve its goals' and 'Thingwall is a superb school, music teaching is excellent.'
- The school has a highly productive relationship with the local authority, which has brokered support to enhance the effectiveness of subject leaders and the early years provision. A national leader of education from an outstanding school has worked closely with the headteacher to review the quality of teaching and learning. Given the school's significant improvements, it is now more likely to be advising other schools and the local authority than receiving external support.

■ The governance of the school

- Governors know the school well and have high aspirations for both staff and pupils. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and provide support and challenge to senior leaders in equal measure.
 - Governors are prudent and have to be convinced of the value and impact of, for example, training courses for teachers and resources for pupils, before they commit funding.
 - Governors know precisely how good the quality of teaching is. They receive detailed reports from senior leaders and scrutinise data and assessment information on pupils' performance.
 - Governors regularly come into school to meet with teachers and talk to pupils about their learning. They are prepared to reward teachers for their good work in raising pupils' achievement and meeting their targets.
 - Governors make sure that they are kept abreast of developments in education. Most recently they have attended training on understanding data and assessment information and on the government's 'Prevent' duty. Governors access national information and attend various events on developments in education and governance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Systems for ensuring that pupils are safe are stringent, highly organised and understood by all staff. All members of staff know precisely what to do in the event that a pupil presents a concern regarding their safety or welfare.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching is good across the school. Teachers and teaching assistants work together very effectively to make sure that learning is engaging. Teachers use information on pupils' prior learning to ensure that activities in class are challenging and are very effective in developing pupils' reading, writing and mathematical skills in all subjects.
- Vibrant displays of pupils' work are visible in all classrooms, corridors and the main hall. These celebrate their achievements and promote the scholarly culture that permeates the school. Good use is made of visits and visitors to stimulate pupils' learning and interest in subjects including local history, world renowned artists, great British personalities and Mayan culture.
- Displays also communicate values such as tolerance and respect for different faiths. They provide the 'backdrop' to pupils' learning, as do displays showing that Thingwall School is part of a learning community with international links. Pupils regularly write to their pen pals in New Delhi, the Isle of Man and Tingvoll (Thingwall) Primary School in Norway.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. In mathematics they ensure that pupils fully appreciate the importance of good calculation and problem-solving skills in everyday life. This was evident in a Year 6 class where pupils were engaged in a range of different tasks linked to their forthcoming residential trip to Colomendy. Pupils were keen to discuss the best way to spend their budget. After carefully considering different options, they worked out the best mode of transport to their destination and the most economical accommodation, leaving money to buy food and all necessary essentials for their stay.
- Teachers make learning fun and provide many opportunities for pupils to think deeply about their learning and develop their creativity. This was evident in a Year 5 English class where pupils were adding their own 'twist' to the cautionary tale of King Midas. All pupils knew the moral of this story, which they said was, 'you should always think before you do something' and 'be careful what you wish for'. Less-able pupils were supported well and made the same good progress as their peers. By the end of the lesson, all pupils had a good understanding of the consequences of their actions and of what happens when power is abused.
- Teachers take every opportunity to develop pupils' fluency and comprehension in reading. This is shown in the wide range of books available to pupils. They read to adults frequently, as shown in their reading records. Teachers often ask pupils to read their own poems and stories to their peers.
- Highly effective phonics teaching is evident across key stage 1 and the Reception class. This was shown in a mixed Year 1/2 class, where the teacher reinforced pupils' understanding of words such as 'blending' and 'segmenting' throughout the lesson and asked pupils to come to the front of the class to practise writing and reading words such as 'complete' and 'escape'. The teacher's insistence that pupils put words into sentences, ensured that all made good progress in their learning.
- Teachers make sure that pupils are fully aware of the importance of using their good speaking and writing skills in all subjects. This was exemplified in a Year 4 class where pupils were discussing artefacts

as part of their topic on Ancient Egypt. After agreeing that today's generation might leave artefacts such as, technology, food, the school logo and 'information about the government' behind, they thoughtfully considered what they would include in their own personal time capsules. Throughout the observation the teacher extended pupils' speaking skills with questions such as, 'could you express that in a better way?' and 'what exactly do you mean by that?' However, teachers' questioning skills are not always as good as this. Occasionally, questions require single-word responses only and do not require pupils to think deeply about their learning, or explain the rationale behind their answers.

- All teachers take a consistent approach to assessing the quality of pupils' work. Teachers give feedback in line with school policies, typically allowing time for pupils to study their comments and improve their work as a result of them. However, feedback is not always as concise as it could be. As a result, not all pupils can say precisely what they need to do to improve their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils develop well in the calm and purposeful atmosphere of the school. A culture of high expectations from school staff and parents pervades, helping pupils to mature and reach their full potential. Pupils are exceptionally confident in their own abilities, as shown in the high level of sophistication in their speaking, reading, writing and mathematical skills.
- Pupils take great pride in the presentation of their work and in their appearance. They want to do well for themselves and their teachers, and are prepared to 'go the extra mile' to research topics of interest and discover new things.
- Pupils are well looked after and are highly confident in talking to any adult about any concerns they may have. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy through exercise and their dietary choices.
- Pupils work hard to develop their positive learning behaviour and adhere to the school's principles of 'resilience, respect, responsibility, reasoning, resourcefulness and reflection', which help them to learn from their mistakes and persevere when learning becomes challenging.
- Pupils know how to stay safe online. For example, they know never to visit social networking sites which are age inappropriate, to delete unsolicited messages and to always talk to an adult if they are not sure about the safety of a link or website.
- Pupils have a good understanding of racism and homophobic bullying. They are insistent that neither happen in school. Older pupils say that 'it is never appropriate to use offensive words'.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of safe and unsafe situation, which they learn about through the personal, social, emotional and health aspects of their curriculum. Visitors from the police, fire, ambulance and children's services help to develop pupils' appreciation of dangers and risks.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and all teachers and pupils say that bullying rarely, if ever, happens at school. The school's behaviour logs reveal that behaviour is typically outstanding.
- Pupils behave outstandingly well at all times. Their behaviour in class is impeccable, where they are eager to answer questions and listen carefully to their peers. Pupils move around the school safely and sensibly and help to ensure that buildings and playing areas are tidy and well looked after.
- Pupils rarely miss a day of school. During the inspection five pupils were not in school. Their absence was authorised. Pupils attend regularly because they do not want to 'miss out' on any aspect of school life.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and respectful. They thoroughly enjoy welcoming visitors into their school and talking about their achievements. They take on their many responsibilities enthusiastically and are excellent school ambassadors.
- Pupils enjoy their roles as team captains, eco-warriors, play leaders, assembly monitors and 'digi champs' (with various technological responsibilities). As 'behaviour consultants' pupils monitor class behaviour logs, report trends to the headteacher and make recommendations for improvements.
- Pupils' behaviour during assemblies is exemplary. Here there is a great sense of unity, common purpose and spirituality. This was shown during a singing assembly, where the orchestra of guitars, recorders and

percussion instruments was flawless, as was the choral accompaniment with its excellent 'song dynamics'. Golden tickets were given for good behaviour, as tension mounted during the tallying of points to see which team – Norman, Saxon, Roman or Viking – had won the weekly book challenge.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Senior leaders' determination to improve the quality of teaching and learning has come to fruition, ensuring that pupils' achievement has improved significantly since the previous inspection. All teachers keep detailed information on the performance of each pupil. This supports their teaching well, as they routinely plan lessons which challenge pupils to achieve to their very best, and identify and support those in danger of falling behind.
- Almost all pupils, including those who have special educational needs or disability and disadvantaged pupils, made at least expected and mostly better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they left school at the end of key stage 2 in 2015.
- For the last two years, pupils' attainment has been high at the end of key stage 2. In 2015, pupils' overall attainment was well above average and particularly strong in writing. Standards at the end of key stage 1 have improved too. At the time of the previous inspection, standards were well below average overall, with reading and mathematics being especially weak. At the end of key stage 2 in 2015, pupils' overall attainment was above average and very strong in writing.
- The school's own data and assessment information, as well as inspection evidence, shows that all groups of pupils made good and often outstanding progress across the school in all subjects in 2015. Currently, pupils are making accelerated progress and attaining well.
- In this school pupils love to read. Those who read for inspectors were eager to show their reading records. These indicate that pupils read regularly and are familiar with the work of a wide range of authors. Pupils have excellent pronunciation, enjoy reading out loud in character and like to be challenged with difficult books. For the last two years, the proportion of pupils secure in their phonics skills and knowledge at the national screening check at the end of Year 1 has been well above average.
- Pupils' progress in writing is outstanding, their skills are highly refined, and they enjoy writing for different purposes. Pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their writing skills in a wide range of subjects, including religious education and science, and to write for different purposes. Their books reveal many examples of factual writing on the lives of well-known historical figures, accounts of educational visits and thoughtful poetry.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge in mathematics. School data and assessment information show that all pupils make substantial progress in this subject in all year groups. Pupils' books reveal many examples of activities which focus on applying mathematics to problem-solving activities. For example, in geography pupils use their mathematical skills to plot coordinates, calculate positions on Ordnance Survey maps and work out different time zones.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities mostly work alongside their peers and are supported well by caring staff who are trained well. Highly effective support outside of class ensures that pupils get the specialist help they need to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills. All such activities are closely monitored. Records show that pupils with special educational needs or disabilities make the same accelerated progress as their peers, often from very low starting points.
- There are no significant differences between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and any other group of pupils in school. In some year groups these pupils perform better than their peers. There were very few disadvantaged pupils at the end of key stage 2 in 2015; therefore data on their performance has to be treated with caution. However, the attainment of these pupils matched that of their peers in school and was much better than that of other pupils nationally in writing and mathematics. Funding for disadvantaged pupils is used exceptionally well to close the narrow gaps, where they exist, between them and their peers in school.
- Teachers expect the most-able pupils to perform particularly well and frequently challenge them with more difficult work. This led to their good attainment in reading, grammar punctuation and spelling and mathematics and their outstanding performance in writing at the end of Year 6 in 2015. Pupils' performance at the end of key stage 1 was not quite as good in reading and mathematics. However, senior leaders are ever-vigilant and have made it a priority to continue to improve attainment in key stage 1 and across the school.

Early years provision

is good

- Children join the Reception class with a wide range of pre-school experiences and different skills and abilities. However, the school's baseline data indicates that the majority of children have weaker skills than those expected for their age in some areas of learning.
- Children get off to an excellent start in the Reception class; this includes those who have special educational needs or disability, disadvantaged children and the most able. By the time they leave, a much higher than average proportion is equipped with the skills necessary for a successful start to Year 1.
- Children learn in a very stimulating indoor learning environment. Here they thrive because teachers and teaching assistants expect great things of them. In addition to this, children have the freedom to decide what to pursue and who to engage with. Adults are always at hand, assessing children's development and gently directing their learning when necessary.
- Both indoor and outdoor learning and playing areas are clearly linked to the various areas of learning. Children enjoy role play and dressing up as pirates, developing their skills at using computers and tablets, reading, writing, construction, measuring and refining their calculation skills.
- Staff praise children for their good work, 'lovely manners' and 'good dressing up'. Displays of children's art work, number and written work, are given pride of place in attractive galleries. This indicates to children that their work is valued.
- Children are highly cooperative. They share resources, listen to each other and work together to solve various problems. This was shown in the outdoor area as children rolled various items, including 'doubloons' (pirate golden coins) and cars, down a long steep chute to see which ones floated and which sank to the bottom of a large tank. They were eager to discuss their findings and experiment with even more items. Children demonstrated their good ability to predict what might happen next and their skills in identifying the relationship between weight, shape and buoyancy.
- The quality of teaching is good. Staff have strong bonds with children and routinely plan different activities to ensure that children of all abilities make good progress. This was exemplified in a session where adults were focusing on developing children's writing skills. Throughout, the teacher and teaching assistant focused on the sounds of different words. Children listened carefully and showed their good understanding of phonics as they sounded out and wrote sentences such as: 'My dog can hear the bell.'
- Parents are of the view that their children are safe, well looked after and making good progress. Those who spoke with inspectors were highly complimentary about early years staff, and indicated that they are kept well informed about how well their children are performing and that staff are very approachable.
- The leadership and management of the early years provision are not outstanding because outcomes for all groups of children are not yet outstanding. In addition to this, the outdoor learning and play area, while used well, is restricted. Senior leaders are well aware of this and have made improving outdoor provision a priority area for development.
- The same stringent safeguarding procedures in operation in key stages 1 and 2 are fully implemented in the early years provision.

School details

Unique reference number	Wirral
Local authority	105051
Inspection number	10012086

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	199
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Adam Sykes
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Danielle Cronin
Telephone number	0151 648 4885
Website	www.thingwall.wirral.sch.uk/website
Email address	headteacher@thingwall.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by pupil premium funding is below average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.)
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups, as well as the proportion who speak English as an additional language, is well below average.
- Children in the early years provision attend the Reception class on a full-time basis.
- The school meets current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school's website meets requirements for the publication of information.
- Before- and after-school services operate from the school. These are subject to a separate inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, three teachers and two teaching assistants have been appointed. The senior leadership team has been reorganised to include a new deputy headteacher and teacher with additional teaching and learning responsibilities. The governing body has been reorganised and includes a number of new members, including a new chair of the governing body. Two new classrooms have been built, to be occupied by Year 3 and 4 pupils in June 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching of small groups of pupils and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read. Joint observations were carried out with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately with senior leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 43 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 25 text responses and letters from parents. Inspectors met informally with parents at the beginning of the school day. Responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 20 members of staff and 45 pupils were also considered.
- A meeting was held with six governors, including the chair of the governing body. Meetings were held with a range of subject leaders, including those responsible for English, mathematics, science and geography. Meetings were also held with leaders responsible for the early years provision and for provision for pupils who have special educational needs or disability.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority and a national leader of education from a local school.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents. These included checks on the quality of teaching, information about pupils' progress, the school's reviews of its own performance, development plans, safeguarding documentation and various records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

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