

Thornton Primary School

Thornton Road, Thornton, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD13 3NN

Inspection dates

6–7 July 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is consistently good or better. It has taken longer than they expected to eradicate weak teaching.
- Senior leaders are too generous in their assessment of the school’s progress. The impact of their actions is not linked closely enough to improving outcomes for pupils across subjects.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good. Although improvements have been made in some year groups, there continue to be weaknesses in provision for other classes and subjects, particularly for the most able.
- In some year groups, gaps between boys, girls and disadvantaged pupils are closing, but this is not the case in all classes in the school.
- Children make faster progress in Nursery than in Reception.
- The impact of safeguarding training is not consistent in its implementation across all members of staff.
- The behaviour of a minority of boys at social times is boisterous and they do not respond quickly enough to adult instructions.
- Although parents are generally supportive of the school, some say that communication between staff and parents could be improved.
- Attendance is below the national average for primary schools, particularly among a small number of families whose children have low attendance.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and governors, through regular checks, have brought about improvement in some areas of the school.
- Outcomes for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 are good. This is due to effective teaching and good teamwork.
- Phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) are taught well. The proportion of pupils reaching the level required in Year 1 is above the national average.
- Pupils feel safe. They are well cared for and willingly take on roles of responsibility. They discuss their work with confidence.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - making sure that senior leaders are crystal clear about how planned actions will lead to improvement in pupils' rates of progress in all classes and subjects
 - developing middle leaders so that they make more difference to the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes
 - continuing to develop teachers' subject knowledge so that it is secure across all aspects of the curriculum
 - ensuring that all staff understand and implement safeguarding policies and procedures after training
 - ensuring that school leaders communicate more effectively with parents.
- Improve outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have higher expectations and consistently meet pupils' learning needs, especially for boys and girls across different subjects, disadvantaged pupils and the most able
 - check what pupils already know and understand when planning 'learning journal' activities and use this information to ensure that work is sufficiently challenging across all subjects of the curriculum, including in modern foreign languages
 - use the strengths in teaching and learning practices seen in upper key stage 2
 - have sufficient mathematical subject knowledge to teach reasoning and problem solving effectively
 - use teaching assistants effectively throughout lessons.
- Improve early years provision so that rates of progress are more consistent:
 - across Nursery and Reception
 - by improving the supervision by and interaction of adults with children so that they all match those of the best.
- Improve pupils' behaviour by:
 - eliminating boisterous behaviours
 - helping those pupils who struggle to control their own behaviour to become more self-disciplined.
- Improve attendance by continuing to work closely with the small number of parents whose children have low attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher and governors have a collective vision of high aspirations for school improvement. This is leading to raised outcomes in some areas of the school. However, senior leaders have not secured consistently good or better teaching in all year groups and subjects. As a result, progress varies between classes and there is a particularly slow rate of improvement in lower key stage 2. This is why leadership requires improvement.
- The headteacher, with effective support from governors, has successfully addressed several areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. They have not been afraid to tackle underperformance and have a realistic evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- Senior leaders believe the effectiveness of some areas of the school's work to be better than it is. As a result, self-evaluation and improvement plans are not rigorous enough. They do not focus with sufficient precision on what needs to be done to secure consistently good outcomes for pupils.
- Middle leaders have all been appointed since the previous inspection, and have had support and training for their role to check that class teachers comply with school policies. However, they have not been checking pupils' progress long enough to show the impact of their work.
- The curriculum provides interesting activities for pupils. However, leaders identified that writing books covering all subject areas had not sufficiently deepened subject knowledge and skills. The subsequent introduction of 'learning journals' partway through the year has not yet resolved this issue. This is because leaders regularly check teaching and progress in English and mathematics more than they check other subjects. As a result, checks have not been thorough enough to ensure consistently good teaching and pupils' outcomes across the curriculum, including in modern foreign languages.
- There is a good balance of extra-curricular activities, including residential visits to places of interest for older pupils. A wide range of sports activities have resulted in success for individual pupils, such as winning events in local athletics competitions. These activities build pupils' confidence and fitness, and help them to appreciate the importance of a healthy lifestyle.
- Leaders have successfully introduced a new assessment tracking system following the removal of national curriculum levels. They analyse this information well. However, they have not successfully raised achievement and closed gaps for pupils in all year groups and classes, particularly lower key stage 2.
- Systems to manage teachers' performance are well organised and identify any necessary training and support required to strengthen teaching. Actions are taken to challenge underperformance.
- The majority of parents are supportive of the school and the education that their children receive. For example, parents gave examples of how staff do their best to develop pupils' confidence and improve their skills, including those who have recently arrived from other schools. However, some parents also feel that communication could be improved, as leaders are not always present or available at the beginning and end of the day to speak to. For example, a few parents of children with particular needs felt that important information about their child had not been fully taken into account.
- Social, moral and cultural development is strongly represented in the school's values for teamwork, respect, achievement, initiative and nurture (TRAIN), which are displayed around the school. Assemblies provide good opportunities for pupils to celebrate their personal achievements and develop their understanding of these values.
- A wide range of artwork displayed around the school and the study of religious beliefs contribute to spiritual development. Pupils learn about democracy and equality of opportunity through the election of the school council, and showed a considered knowledge of the recent European Union referendum and the election of MPs.
- The headteacher has ensured that the pupil premium funding is used wisely to support eligible pupils. However, while the gaps in achievement between these pupils and others are closing, she is aware that more needs to be done to ensure that they reach even higher standards.
- The local authority has provided support to leaders and staff, which is contributing to the improvements in achievement and teaching now being seen. It has confidence in the leadership of the school and has rightly judged that there is future capacity to improve. However, the support provided focused too much on English and mathematics monitoring and did not check other subjects thoroughly enough.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governors have a good range of skills and experience that enable them to fulfil their statutory duties, including safeguarding duties, consideration of teachers' pay awards and ensuring proper financial management. They ensure that leaders provide information about teaching and pupils'

achievement in a format that can be understood. This helps them to ask the right questions and hold leaders to account.

- Governors have an increased presence in the school and judge for themselves the effectiveness of work that has been done against the targets in the school’s action and improvement plans. Minutes of meetings show that governors analyse the school’s work and sometimes challenge leaders to obtain further information.
- Governors receive the necessary summarised information that allows them to monitor the spending of pupil premium funding and to have confidence that it is having some impact, even if the school is not quite there yet. They have a good understanding of the link between teachers’ performance and pay. Governors have approved the use of the pupil premium grant and school sports funding.
- Individual governors carry clear specific responsibilities for areas of the work of the school and check upon them carefully. Reporting back to the full governing body is efficient and underpins informed debate. For example, the safeguarding governor completed an audit of safeguarding, including an update of the safeguarding policy that was ratified by governors during the week of the inspection. As a result, they were not able to check whether recent training had been effective.
- The school’s website includes all the information required by law.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. All staff are regularly trained in safeguarding. However, the impact of this training is not consistent across all members of staff, with gaps in knowledge about, for example, female genital mutilation. In contrast, leaders are rigorous in their pursuit of safeguarding issues. Case files are appropriately organised and explain the chronological process of actions taken and who has been involved. The school works closely with other professionals and services to ensure that the needs of those with particular vulnerabilities are well met. Recruitment procedures are robust, so proper checks are carried out to make sure that those appointed to posts are judged suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across year groups and classes. Although some considerable strengths were identified, the extent of teachers’ subject knowledge and their practice remains variable. As a result, too few pupils in Years 1, 3 and 4 make the progress that should be expected of them.
- The variability in the quality of teaching can be seen in the way that teachers question pupils. Some teachers ask carefully worded questions that get pupils really thinking, while others too often ask questions that do not probe pupils’ thinking deeply enough. Some upper key stage 2 teachers are more adept than other teachers across key stage 2 at checking how well pupils are doing in lessons, adapting teaching to provide more challenge or support where needed. Other teachers carry on with their plan, not taking enough account of how well pupils are doing. The more effective teachers have higher expectations of what pupils can and should achieve.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants varies. Where teachers guide them well, teaching assistants give good-quality support to pupils. Some teaching assistants are more experienced in giving pupils just the right amount of support. Occasionally, teaching assistants are underused in some parts of lessons.
- Teaching is stronger in English than in mathematics and, as a result, rates of progress in reading and writing are accelerating at a faster rate than in mathematics. The teaching of phonics has improved throughout the school, which is helping all pupils improve their reading and writing skills.
- The teaching of mathematics develops and supports pupils’ understanding of number facts and calculations. Pupils are fluent and can recall number facts to solve problems. However, the use of logic and reasoning skills is less well developed, particularly in younger pupils in the school.
- The teaching of the most able pupils varies from class to class. Where learning is successful, expectations of pupils’ engagement in lessons are increasing and more pupils contribute their own ideas, which helps them grow in confidence. At other times, pupils are asked to answer numerous questions that repeat skills or understanding and this wastes valuable learning time.
- All classrooms and areas around school are bright and vibrant. Helpful prompts are displayed on ‘working walls’ to support pupils, and pupils’ best work is on display.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident when speaking with adults. This is exemplified by the warm and friendly relationships between adults and pupils, who enjoy the adults' sense of humour.
- Pupils feel safe. They understand what it means, and older pupils, particularly, can describe how adults in school keep them safe.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and belief in themselves as successful learners have improved considerably since the previous inspection. The school environment is attractive, secure and well looked after.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber-, physical and verbal bullying. They confirm that they feel safe and that bullying incidents are rare. A small minority of parents identified bullying as a concern on the Parent View questionnaire. However, the pupils' questionnaire and pupil discussions with inspectors indicated that name calling and unkindness gets less as they get older. Discussions with parents indicated that bullying was dealt with quickly by class teachers. Bullying incidents in the school are recorded carefully, together with the action taken.
- Parents are generally supportive of the school's actions to support pupils' personal development and welfare. However, a small number of parents say that communication between staff could be improved, particularly the way in which the school responds to their concerns. The school resolves complaints according to the complaints policy, and examination of detailed records for the last 12 months demonstrates that care and sensitivity have been used appropriately.
- Pupils readily take on additional responsibilities, such as being a school council representative, head boy, head girl or house captain. The guidance that pupils are given and the responsibilities that they readily take on give them a very good understanding of the school's values. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- School leaders have good systems in place to support pupils' welfare and safety, particularly the safety of the most vulnerable pupils. The breakfast club is well attended and enables pupils to get the day off to a positive start as they eat healthily and socialise together in a safe environment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Not all teachers have sufficiently high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Inattention and distraction are occasionally evident and linked to lessons where expectations or delivery of subject matter are not well judged. In these classes, teachers do not act swiftly enough to refocus pupils' attention on the work in hand.
- A minority of boys are boisterous at playtimes. Some do not respond quickly enough to adult instructions. For example, when asked to take care and not run up and down a bank of grass, they were slow to respond or moved back to the activity when not closely supervised.
- In contrast, pupils conduct themselves well during discussions, taking turns to present their ideas and respecting the views of others even when they do not necessarily agree with them.
- Attendance rates have fluctuated since the last inspection, especially for persistently absent pupils. Rates of persistent absence have decreased since last year, but not at the same rate as those nationally. There is a small number of families whose children do not attend frequently enough. As a result, attendance is below national average.

Outcomes for pupils require improvement

- Expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics was below the national average in 2014 and moved closer to the national average in 2015. This improvement took place despite the high turnover of teaching staff over the last two years. However, rates of progress across year groups in the school is inconsistent, with Year 6 achieving the highest progress over time.
- Attainment of current Year 6 pupils is above the national for writing and broadly in line with the national in reading, grammar, punctuation and spelling. Current attainment in mathematics is below the national average. Work in Year 6 books shows the significant improvements that many pupils have made this year.
- Progress in writing is strong, because pupils use a wide range of vocabulary and the correct tense, and

are able to change grammar and punctuation to improve sentences. Pupils do not make expected progress in mathematics, because of weaknesses in their ability to develop an argument and follow a line of enquiry when they reason mathematically. Their ability to solve multi-step problems using addition and subtraction as well as using multiplication and division is better.

- Other pupils in key stage 2 do not achieve the standards expected for their age and have fallen behind. They are not working at the expected standard and need to make fast progress to catch up. Lower key stage 2 classes, in particular, show different rates of progress for boys and girls across reading, writing and mathematics. This is linked to variation in the quality of teaching between classes rather than gender patterns across the school.
- By the end of Year 2, pupils attain the same in reading, writing and mathematics as at other schools nationally. Year 1 pupils benefit from the well-structured provision for learning their letters and sounds. In 2015 and 2016, the proportion of pupils who met the expected level in the phonics screening check was above the national figure. In Year 2, most of the remaining pupils reach the national figures.
- In mathematics, there is a focus on the basic skills associated with number across Years 1 and 2, such as addition, subtraction and counting in tens. However, there are limited opportunities for pupils to develop reasoning skills through more challenging problem solving, and this is an area for development.
- The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in early years dipped below the national average in 2015, compared with above-average achievement in 2014. Current evidence indicates that, this year, children are back on track to make good progress.
- The most able pupils are not reaching the standards of which they are capable. There are not enough opportunities to challenge pupils' thinking and develop depth in their understanding. As a result, too few pupils reach the highest levels by the end of Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making similar progress to all other pupils due to improved provision and a number of new initiatives, enabling them to be supported more effectively and to catch up if they are falling behind. Leaders have rightly identified that some intervention activities need to be improved.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that all staff have consistently high expectations for children's learning over time. Children in Nursery make more rapid progress than those in Reception. Gaps between boys' and girls' achievement have narrowed slightly, but not fast enough to fully prepare boys for learning in Year 1.
- The proportion of children reaching expected levels at the end of Reception declined in 2015 compared to 2014. A lower proportion of children than the national average achieved a good level of development. Current evidence indicates that this has improved, with gaps in achievement between disadvantaged children and others narrowing. However, few of the most able children exceed the early learning goals, because they are not well challenged.
- The early years leader has a generally accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in provision and has a clear vision for improvement. However, information about the numbers of pupils exceeding expectations is unclear.
- Children are generally purposefully engaged. They enjoy imaginative play. However, the quality of engagement in learning is generally better when children are supervised or when adults interact with them.
- Early years classrooms and outdoor areas are welcoming, with a wide range of children's literacy and artwork on display. Staff make sure that the children behave sensibly, feel safe and are kept safe in both the indoor and outdoor areas. In an outdoor activity, for example, children worked well together in small groups to make a chair using construction equipment. They showed a high level of personal and social skills.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, covering all the required areas of learning. The school has rightly identified that mark making and early development of writing skills are an area for development.
- There are generally positive relationships with parents, although some are hard to reach and less involved in contributing to assessments made of their children.

School details

Unique reference number	107223
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	10012028

This inspection 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	646
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Amanda Cade
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Elizabeth Davison
Telephone number	01274 833839
Website	www.thorntonpri.co.uk
Email address	office@thorntonpri.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26–27 June 2014

Information about this school

- Thornton is larger than the average-sized primary school. The school is now a three-form entry school following a period of phased expansion.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals and those looked after by the local authority) is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- The school met the government's floor standards in 2015, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- Since the last inspection, there have been a number of appointments, including a new headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders and almost half the class teachers.
- A local leader of education, who supported the school over a number of years, has become a member of the governing body since her recent retirement and continues to encourage the school to use expertise across a number of schools in Bradford.
- The school runs a breakfast club that is open to all pupils and their parents.
- The school meets the requirements on the publication of information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in a range of lessons across all classes. Five lesson observations were carried out jointly with members of the senior leadership team, who also took part in short walks through lessons. A number of taught sessions for small groups of pupils were also observed.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils of all ages in lessons, in meetings and informally around the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised in class and separately by inspectors with the headteacher and senior leaders.
- Inspectors considered 101 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View), as well as responses to the inspection questionnaire completed by six pupils and 29 members of staff. Inspectors also met some parents at the beginning and end of the school day. The lead inspector contacted three parents by telephone after they had left their contact details.
- A meeting was held with the chair of the governing body and three other governors. Meetings were held with school leaders responsible for the curriculum, teaching and learning, pastoral care, English, mathematics, early years provision and provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- A meeting was held with a representative of the local authority who supports the school's work.
- Inspectors took notes of displays around the school and the work in outdoor areas.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents including the school's reviews of its own performance, checks on the quality of teaching, development plans, safeguarding documentation, information about pupils' progress, and records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.

Inspection team

Desmond Dunne, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Strauss	Ofsted Inspector
Marianne Young	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2016

