

Thorpe Acre Infant School

Alan Moss Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 4SQ

Inspection dates

24–25 January 2017

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
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders have a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and continually strive for school improvement to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils.
- The early years setting provides children with an excellent start to their life in school. Many children enter the school with levels of development below those typical for their age, but leaders ensure that individual needs are identified and met.
- Pupils make very good progress in a range of subjects by the time they leave Year 2. They are well prepared to make the transition to junior school.
- The proportion of pupils who reach the higher standard in reading and writing is above the national average.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Leaders are passionate and determined that pupils will succeed, and they do all that they can to ensure that they are supported.
- Teaching assistants are extremely effective, developing excellent working relationships with pupils and providing individualised support to ensure pupils' continued progress.
- Leaders have ensured that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used effectively.
- Pupils' conduct is good. They are courteous and confident. Pupils are happy and enjoy their experiences in school.
- Leaders have developed very good relationships with many parents to support their children's learning.
- School leaders prioritise the promotion of pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare. Pupils benefit from enriching activities that extend their experiences. Leaders do all that they can to ensure that pupils are safe and well.
- Attendance has improved but remains below the national average for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and for disadvantaged pupils.
- Teachers' expectations of middle-ability pupils are sometimes too low and these pupils are not always sufficiently challenged.
- The proportion of the most able girls reaching the higher standard in mathematics is below the national average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that work is consistently matched to pupils' abilities, particularly to ensure that middle-ability pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- Develop strategies to engage and challenge the most able girls in mathematics to ensure that more pupils reach the higher standard.
- Extend the school's work with parents to involve more of them in supporting their child's attendance, learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are determined to ensure continued school improvement.
- Positive relationships between leaders and staff ensure that staff are motivated to realise senior leaders' vision and high aspirations for the success of all pupils. Staff are proud to work at the school and pupils feel valued.
- The headteacher's ambition to provide the best possible education for pupils is clear to all. Staff, governors and parents recognise and appreciate his work. As one parent commented, 'He couldn't possibly do more.'
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is a strength of the school. Allocated funds are used effectively. Leaders have a very good knowledge and understanding of individual pupils' needs and ensure that processes are in place to support them. As a result, these pupils make very good progress. Their parents, who made their views known to the inspector, were extremely positive about the support their children receive.
- Leadership of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good. Leaders have shared their high expectations and introduced a series of 'non-negotiables'. This means that pupils know what to expect in their lessons and are ready to learn.
- Leaders have ensured that additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used extremely effectively. The use of this funding to provide bespoke provision has ensured that outcomes for these pupils have improved and they make very good progress.
- The interesting and engaging curriculum has been adapted to meet the needs of current pupils. Since the last inspection, leaders have identified the need to develop pupils' speech and language skills as a means to improve writing. They have advocated a 'talk for writing strategy' and ensured that it is followed by all teachers across the school. Pupils' progress in both speaking and writing was apparent during the course of the inspection.
- Leaders have identified the need to improve pupils' physical development. They have used the physical education and primary sport funding to secure the services of a sports coach who works with pupils to develop their gross and fine motor skills. In addition, a variety of extra-curricular sporting activities is provided, such as archery, football and dance.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. They ensure that pupils are able to participate in a range of activities that widen and extend their experiences. These include visits off site and involvement in charity fund-raising events. Leaders promote fundamental British values in all aspects of school life. Pupils are well prepared for the next stages in their education.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' attendance remains a priority. The school's family liaison officer works with families of pupils who struggle to attend school regularly. Leaders have introduced a variety of incentives to encourage pupils to attend. Attendance is now line with the national average. Persistent absence for disadvantaged

pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is closely monitored. Current pupils' attendance is improving.

- Leaders have developed effective working relationships with the majority of parents, offering a variety of opportunities to help parents to support their child's learning. For example, parents are invited into school to participate in activities such as 'crafty families' and 'fun and families', where pupils work alongside their parents on various activities. Parents who have participated are extremely positive and appreciative of these opportunities. Leaders are keen to develop relationships with more parents to further support their child's learning.
- Leaders have not yet ensured that the quality of teaching is good enough in all lessons. Middle-ability pupils are not consistently challenged across the curriculum and the most able girls are not effectively supported to reach the higher standard in mathematics.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school and share the headteacher's ambition and aspirations for pupils' success.
- Governors are knowledgeable and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a good understanding of the school's context and its means to realise its aims. They regularly visit the school and are supportive of leaders to bring about further improvement.
- The governing body has the skills and understanding to hold leaders closely to account. For example, members monitor the spending of additional funding and evaluate its impact, asking appropriately challenging questions.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a shared understanding of the responsibility to ensure pupils' safety and well-being.
- Leaders take appropriate action if they have concerns over a child's welfare and are robust in following up referrals made to external agencies.
- Staff are appropriately trained and fully understand the potential risks that are pertinent to pupils in the school. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and the headteacher is dedicated to ensuring pupils' safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good and leads to good progress.
- Teachers plan series of lessons around a theme, which is explored through different subjects. Teachers are innovative in the activities they plan, which means that pupils are inspired and interested in their learning. For example, pupils enjoyed carrying out an experiment where they investigated the effects of different drinks on their teeth. The results of these were gruesome enough to inspire them to both develop their scientific understanding, alongside developing their awareness of healthy lifestyles.

- Teaching is particularly strong in Year 2 where lessons are carefully structured and planned around the needs of individuals. Teaching skilfully challenges the most able while supporting the least able to work on similar activities that are pitched at individual pupils' levels.
- The use of teaching assistants is highly effective across the whole school. Teachers plan collaboratively with teaching assistants who are extremely knowledgeable about individuals' needs and are skilled in providing for them. In some lessons, teaching assistants support pupils to participate in whole-class activities. In other lessons, they work with smaller groups of pupils on adapted activities. The support they provide helps pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress.
- Since the last inspection, teachers have focused on developing pupils' writing skills. Pupils are given plenty of opportunities to write for extended periods and are encouraged to take risks in their writing. Younger pupils re-create stories they know while older pupils are encouraged to adapt and develop them in their own writing. This encourages their confidence and develops their independent writing. Pupils are proud of their successes in writing and appreciate their 'big writing' sessions.
- Teachers set homework regularly. Tasks are appropriate for the age and stage of pupils who say that they find these activities interesting and helpful. Parents report that homework helps their children's learning.
- The teaching of phonics is strong across all areas of the school. Regular phonics sessions build on prior learning and help pupils' confidence in reading as well as their writing. For example, during the inspection, pupils were using their phonics skills in a literacy activity to determine the correct spellings of words.
- Most teachers provide effective feedback to pupils, in line with leaders' expectations. Where this is most effective, pupils are able to recognise their successes and identify where they need to improve. This has a significant impact on their progress, particularly in English.
- Teachers share learning aims with pupils to help them understand what they are learning and how they can improve their work. However, in some lessons, teachers do not make aims specific enough to enable pupils to concentrate on focused aspects of their work. This means that not all pupils are able to make the small steps they need in order to further their understanding.
- Levels of challenge for the most able and the least able pupils are appropriate. Since the last inspection, there has been a focus on challenging the most able pupils. Teachers share their high expectations and ensure that levels of challenge for these pupils are high in most lessons. The least able pupils are very effectively supported. However, expectations of the middle-ability pupils are sometimes too low, which means that they do not make as much progress as they might, particularly in English and mathematics.
- In some lessons, activities continue for too long, which means that pupils, particularly the middle-ability pupils, lose focus.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Relationships between pupils and staff are extremely positive and leaders have promoted an attitude of care and nurture of all pupils.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe and to make healthy choices. For example, they know that they should eat a healthy diet that includes fruit and vegetables.
- All pupils have access to the breakfast club, which provides a welcoming start to the day. During the inspection, several pupils were taking advantage of this opportunity and were observed enjoying a variety of breakfasts and engaging in different activities with staff, such as table tennis and reading.
- Leaders prioritise pupils' personal development. Pupils participate in a variety of activities, including off-site visits, to broaden their experiences.
- Pupils understand the need to treat people with respect. They demonstrate tolerance of those who are different and say that they 'have to be kind to everyone'. However, pupils' understanding of diversity beyond their own experiences is limited.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They conduct themselves well, both in lessons and around school. They are courteous to adults and to each other.
- Pupils are confident. They take pride in themselves and in their work. They understand the values of the school and are proud to be part of it.
- The school environment is very well kept and pupils demonstrate respect and care of the buildings and facilities. Pupils look after learning resources and equipment well.
- Pupils behave very well in lessons and there is very little disruption to learning because they work hard, focus well and want to succeed.
- The attendance of all groups has improved and is now above the national average for all pupils. However, disadvantaged pupils' attendance is below the national average and the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is well above the national average. Nevertheless, this has improved and leaders are aware of the need to continue to work with parents to improve this.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- A large majority of pupils enter the school working at levels below those typical for their age, but they make very good progress by the time they leave key stage 1. They are well prepared to make the transition to junior school.
- The most able pupils make particularly strong progress in English. A higher proportion of pupils reach the greater depth standard in reading and writing than pupils nationally.

- The proportion of pupils who reach the expected standard in phonics has improved, although it remains below the national average.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used extremely well. Disadvantaged pupils make particularly good progress in phonics and a greater proportion of pupils reach the expected standard than all pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make very good progress in all subjects because teachers have a good understanding of their needs and provide appropriate support.
- Pupils make good progress in a variety of subjects, including science and humanities, because teachers plan exciting activities that enthuse and motivate pupils.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is less strong than in reading and writing, particularly for the most able girls.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is a strength of the school. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and continually work to evaluate and improve children's experiences.
- Children are safe and happy. They engage well in activities and enjoy coming to school. Statutory duties are met and appropriate risk assessments are in place. Safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Many children enter the school with levels of development below those typical for their age. Staff ensure that children's needs are quickly identified and teachers work well together to ensure that these needs are met.
- The early years leader has developed effective systems of monitoring and tracking children's progress. This information is used to ensure that activities are designed around individual children's learning needs.
- Staff ensure that children feel involved in their learning and seek children's ideas when planning activities. For example, children expressed their enjoyment of the construction area, so teachers developed an activity to develop number work using this area. This means that children find activities interesting and engaging.
- Leaders have developed positive working relationships with many parents and use a variety of means to involve parents in their child's learning. For example, parents are encouraged to use an online communication system which allows them to share their child's learning at home with teachers at school. The inspector also noted the effective use of 'wow' slips, which parents complete when children have practised or learned something new at home. This means that teachers are able to adapt the provision in school to further support children's progress.
- Leaders identify a termly focus, based on their evaluation of children's current progress. For example, specific aspects of writing were identified as an area of development, so leaders ensured that opportunities for writing were incorporated into every area of the provision. During the inspection, children were practising their letter formation in various areas in both the indoor and outdoor provision. The importance of writing is further highlighted through the use of 'writing windows', the continually

updated displays of children's written work. Children are proud to reflect back on their earlier work and recognise the progress that they have made.

- Children are encouraged to take appropriate risks and make mistakes in order to develop their resilience and to improve their attitudes to learning in a safely managed and supportive way. For example, a group of boys demonstrated determination in creating an electrical circuit, trying out different methods and returning to their task until they were successful. Another child was building a ramp using drainpipes and recognised that he needed an additional bracket to support the ramp to prevent the car from falling off.
- Teachers set regular and appropriate homework which supports children to practise their skills and to consolidate their learning. Parents with whom the inspector spoke said that these activities were beneficial to their child's progress.
- Levels of challenge are appropriate, particularly in adult-directed activities. Teachers have high expectations of the most able children and ensure that work is matched to their ability, providing extension activities where appropriate.
- Additional funding to support disadvantaged children is used very effectively. The proportion of these children reaching a good level of development by the end of their time in the early years has improved.
- The progress children make when participating in adult-led activities is good. However, provision was weaker in unstructured activities. There was a lack of direction, which meant that children were not making as much progress as they should during these sessions.
- From their low starting points, children make good progress. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development has improved and continues to do so. However, it remains below the national average.

School details

Unique reference number	119958
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10023181

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	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Johnson
Headteacher	Alex Clark
Telephone number	01509 212021
Website	www.tais.leics.sch.uk
Email address	office@tais.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 February 2012

Information about this school

- Thorpe Acre Infant School is smaller than the average-sized school.
- The early years provision is in a Reception class where children attend full time.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is slightly higher than average.
- A privately run pre-school playgroup, the Thorpe Acre Pre-School Playgroup, operates from a mobile classroom on the school site. This setting was reported on separately by Ofsted in October 2014. A high proportion of pupils have attended this provision.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes, some jointly with school leaders.
- The inspector observed pupils at the school's breakfast club, playtime, lunchtime and during a whole-school assembly.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents before school and also considered the 16 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 13 text messages sent to the Ofsted free-text service.
- The inspector spoke to staff and considered the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at pupils' work, both in lessons and as part of a work sample.
- The inspector held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector spoke to pupils of all ages, both formally and informally.
- The inspector scrutinised a variety of school documentation, including records relating to safeguarding and behaviour, school improvement plans and the school's self-evaluation. Information taken from the school's website was also considered.

Inspection team

Deborah Mosley, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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