

# Thornhill Primary School

Thornhill Road, Islington, London N1 1HX

## Inspection dates

21–22 March 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- Leaders, including governors, are highly ambitious and have a clear vision for the school. Their leadership has been successful in improving the school.
- In times of challenge, the whole school community shows great resolve by maintaining the culture of high expectations. This results in pupils' education remaining the key focus.
- The governance of the school has significantly improved since the previous inspection. Governors are effective in supporting and challenging senior leaders in developing and improving the school.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are now good. Pupils are polite and courteous to each other and adults. They display positive attitudes to learning.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and value the education that their children receive.
- Children get off to a positive start in the early years. They are warmly welcomed into the bright and stimulating environment where they feel safe and secure. Teaching is effective and children make good progress.
- Staff understand how to keep pupils' safe. There are clear systems in place so that staff know exactly what to do should they have a concern that a pupil may be at risk from harm. Consequently, pupils feel safe in school.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2016, the proportion of pupils attaining at the level expected for their age was above the national figures for reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils currently in the school make good gains in reading writing and mathematics in most year groups. Leaders agree that pupils' progress in the wider curriculum is less secure.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and this can be seen in the demands they make of most pupils to make better progress. However, the most able, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not challenged enough.
- Leaders and managers carefully analyse the attainment of pupils, including groups of pupils currently in the school. However, this information is not used to monitor the progress of all groups of pupils from their starting points. Consequently, some of the groups underachieve in key stage 2, for example the most able and the most able disadvantaged pupils.

## Full report


### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Challenge the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, with work that is well matched to their abilities, especially at key stage 2.
- Develop the school's assessment system so that pupils' progress, including all groups of pupils, can be tracked and analysed more robustly from their starting points.
- Improve pupils' progress in the foundation subjects by:
  - leaders monitoring the coverage of these subjects more closely
  - carefully analysing and tracking pupils' progress.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders and governors have taken effective action to improve the school since the previous inspection. Following that inspection, there was a period of instability and pupils' standards declined. The new headteacher and deputy headteacher were appointed and quickly identified what needed to be done. They put into place an action plan to reverse the decline and raise pupils' standards. 
- The headteacher has quickly created a culture of high expectations. Her determination and clarity of purpose have resulted in creating a vision that is shared by the whole school community. The large majority of parents who responded to the online survey or who spoke to inspectors agreed that the school was well led and managed and that staff were available to listen to their concerns.
- Leaders, including governors, have worked hard to encourage more parents and carers to participate in school events. As a result, parents have many opportunities to get involved in the life of the school. Parents say that they value the information that the school provides about their children's learning.
- The curriculum is enhanced through making purposeful links across different subjects. For example, in English, pupils learn to write a report based on their history topic of Ancient Greece.
- Leaders make good use of the many stimulating and interesting places in their locality to broaden pupils' understanding of the wider world. This includes visits to museums, a speed boat ride on the Thames and studying habitats at the local community garden. There are a wide range of clubs on offer for pupils to attend, including gymnastics, gardening, orchestra and coding. The large majority of pupils attend a club. As a result, pupils enjoy learning.
- Pupils learn about the rule of law, democracy and tolerance, and this is reflected in their good behaviour. They learn to respect the views of others and they know that people in different parts of the world have faiths and beliefs that are different to their own. Displays around the school demonstrate how pupils' diversity is explored and celebrated. British values are embedded well within the curriculum. For example, pupils were given the opportunity to debate the pros and cons of leaving the European Union and thereafter voted on whether to remain or exit from the European Union. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The primary school physical education and sport premium is spent well. It is used to skill up staff in teaching physical education and enable pupils to participate in competitive sport, as well as buy in specialist sports coaches to run clubs. Pupils have recently won the top places for swimming and football in the local authority. Pupils enjoy participating in the different sporting activities on offer. Pupils made the following comment to inspectors: 'There is a good balance between learning inside and then going outside to do sport.'
- Performance management systems are robust. All staff are held to account for pupils' progress. They know that their progression on the pay scale is dependent on how successful they are in the classroom. Leaders have successfully tackled previously

weaker teaching L  
SEP

- Effective use is made of the special educational needs funding to ensure that the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are met. Highly skilled specialist teaching assistants provide effective support for this group of pupils. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their different starting points.
- Middle leaders develop their different areas of responsibility in line with the school's priorities for improvement. This results in promoting pupils' achievement.
- The local authority provides effective support to leaders and governors, which further promotes the school's improvement.
- Leaders use the pupil premium funding effectively. There is a clear rationale for how the money is being spent. Consequently, most disadvantaged pupils make good progress in their learning in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the most able disadvantaged pupils, especially in key stage 2, do not make as much progress as they are capable of.
- Leaders and managers work effectively to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school. However, there is still some variation in the quality of teaching.
- Leaders agree that developing the core subjects has been a high priority. Subsequently, pupils' progress in the foundation subjects is not closely monitored. This results in pupils making inconsistent progress in the wider curriculum.
- School leaders have extensive information about pupils' learning and attainment on an individual level. However, their systems do not clearly show how well different groups of pupils progress from their different starting points. Consequently, some of the most able key stage 2 pupils do not make as much progress as they are capable of to reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

## **Governance of the school**

- Governors are enthusiastic and passionate about the school and the pupils. They visit the school frequently and work hard to engage with the school community. Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, so they know the issues to be tackled. Governors have been instrumental in securing the right leaders to take the school forward, following a period of instability.
- Since the previous inspection, governors have undertaken a review of how the governing body works and implemented an action plan to address areas for improvement. As a result, the governing body was reorganised and new governors were recruited based on the skills they could offer. Governors undertake a raft of training programmes to support them to execute their duties effectively. They attend training events in school, including for safeguarding, and this enables them to keep abreast of current guidance and what the school is aiming to achieve. Consequently, governors are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to hold leaders to account.
- Governors work alongside leaders at different levels so this gives them first-hand knowledge of how the school runs on a day-to-day basis. They receive information

from school leaders and this helps them to provide the right balance of support and challenge. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions when they have concerns.

- The governing body has a good awareness of how the school uses the pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils who attend the school. Governors ensure that the school budget is well managed and are actively seeking ways to fund-raise for the school.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff know pupils well. They ensure that all pupils, including those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, are provided with effective support and guidance.
- The school site is secure and all adults who visit school are carefully checked. Procedures for vetting new employees and volunteers are thorough.
- The school works in partnership with parents and other agencies to ensure that pupils are safe. Staff have a good awareness of safeguarding issues and procedures to follow should they be concerned about a pupil's welfare. They have all read part 1 of 'Keeping children safe in education 2016' and talk with some confidence about the indicators of radicalisation, sexual exploitation and female genital mutilation. As a result, staff have a shared understanding that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- All adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons. Classrooms are well organised, creating a positive learning environment for pupils to learn. Pupils are proud to talk about their work.
- Many pupils demonstrate a 'can do' approach to their learning which helps them succeed. Their positive attitudes are supported by the very good relationships that exist between adults and pupils.
- Pupils write well because teachers demonstrate and explain different styles of writing. Pupils write at length and for a wide variety of purposes. Teachers encourage pupils to use ambitious vocabulary to make their writing interesting. A Year 1 pupil told an inspector, 'I like learning new words like irritated as they help me improve my writing.' Pupils' handwriting is much improved as there is a consistent approach to handwriting across the school.
- Teachers provide appropriate support for those pupils who speak English as an additional language. This support helps pupils speak, read and write English fluently.
- Teachers skilfully involve pupils in assessing their own work and that of their peers. Pupils were seen in a Year 4 class giving each other feedback on how to improve their work in English.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and questioning is effective. Activities are generally well planned to support learning for most abilities within the class.
- Teaching assistants and additional adults are generally well deployed, particularly to

support the learning of the least able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Adults' questions are usually well thought through to engage pupils. As a result, most pupils make good gains in their learning.

- Pupils recall number facts quickly and accurately. They use a range of practical resources to embed their learning. As a result, a high proportion of pupils reach the expected standards in mathematics for their age. From looking at pupils' mathematics books, inspectors found that there were not enough opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems and develop their reasoning skills. Consequently, there are fewer pupils currently working at the higher standards in mathematics.
- Although teachers have high aspirations for all pupils, teachers' expectations of what some pupils can achieve could be even higher, especially at key stage 2. For the most able pupils, teachers are not sufficiently adept at identifying the next steps in pupils' learning to ensure that they are fully challenged.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils told inspectors that they know who to talk to if they are worried. They are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously. Pupils are encouraged to anonymously share their concerns using the 'no name no shame' forms in class. The latest pupil survey shows that most pupils feel safe in school.
- Pupils also know how to stay safe outside school. They are taught how to stay safe from dangers such as roads, railways and water. They know that they should not talk to strangers or provide personal information when using the internet.
- Staff are very aware of the social and emotional needs of pupils and they endeavour to provide high-quality care. There are a few pupils who have difficulty managing their feelings and emotions, and struggle in lessons and in the playground. To address this, the school provides calming activities such as 'Restart' space and art therapy. This offers focused support to these pupils within a small and nurturing environment. Consequently, pupils learn effective strategies to help them regulate their feelings and emotions.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide pupils with a wide range of activities to choose from, including cooking, craft, drawing and construction. Pupils choose what to eat and drink from a healthy selection. Pupils from Nursery to Year 6 attend the extended provision. Adults carefully consider the needs of all pupils and plan activities accordingly. Consequently, pupils are happy and have positive social experiences.
- School leaders have worked hard with parents and pupils to increase rates of attendance and to reduce persistent absence. This has included appointing a learning and pastoral leader who works with pupils who are persistently absent. Leaders' efforts to improve attendance are making an impact, with current attendance now being in line with the national average. Fewer pupils than previously are persistently absent and the gap in attendance between disadvantaged pupils and others is closing. However, the rigour of tracking rates of absence and persistent absence for groups of pupils is

inconsistent.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is now good. Pupils are polite, friendly and helpful. They get on well with each other and are eager to talk to visitors about their work.
- Pupils behave well in class as well as when they move around the school, which they do safely. They have a good understanding of what bullying means and of the different types of bullying, including that related to modern technology. There are few reported incidents related to bullying or racist behaviour and the number of exclusions has reduced. Pupils say that there are times when they fall out but that adults are on hand to help to resolve issues.
- The playground is zoned into different areas. During lunchtime, the older pupils access the community space to play ball games. Trained peer mentors and play leaders help to mediate and resolve conflicts that occur. As a result, pupils enjoy playtimes and are happy and safe. During a discussion with an inspector, one pupil remarked, 'We all get along really well here. We all think about how to resolve our problems peacefully.'
- Pupils show respect towards each other and to adults. They say that pupils are treated equally and fairly and that discrimination on any grounds is not tolerated. Pupils report that there are times when name-calling occurs but that the headteacher responds quickly to make sure that it stops.
- The large majority of parents who responded to the survey, or who spoke to inspectors, agreed or strongly agreed that their children are well looked after and behave well in school.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- In 2016, the published outcomes for pupils in key stages 1 and 2 showed that the proportion of pupils attaining at the standard expected for their age was above the national figures for reading, writing and mathematics.
- At key stage 2, the number of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national figures.
- At key stage 1, the number of pupils reaching the higher standards in reading and mathematics was broadly in line with national figures but was above the national figure for writing.
- The proportion of pupils that met the expected standard in phonics last year was above the national figure. Inspectors observed high-quality phonics teaching. This supports the development of pupils' reading skills. Pupils in Year 2 and Year 3 use their phonics competently to read unfamiliar words. Leaders have recruited trained volunteers to read with pupils who need extra support. More advanced readers read fluently, confidently and with good understanding. During a guided reading session, a pupil commented, 'These books are inspiring; I would like to be an author when I grow up.'
- Work in pupils' books shows that they make good gains in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good gains in their



learning as a result of timely interventions and good partnership with outside agencies.

- Pupils have a secure grasp of the basic skills that enable them to write fluently and confidently for a range of purposes. They are given opportunities to edit and improve their work before writing their best copy in their publishing books. At key stage 1, they are increasing their understanding of the need to punctuate their sentences with capital letters and full stops. A Year 1 pupil told an inspector, 'I am proud of my story plan as it helped me include lots of detail in my writing.' In key stage 2, pupils rapidly build on this good start, increasing the amount they write and their use of more complicated vocabulary and sentence structure. By Year 6, pupils' writing is imaginative, lively and increasingly engages the interest of the reader.
- The pupil premium is used effectively to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils. Current performance information suggests that most disadvantaged pupils are on track to meet the expected standard for their age. This reflects leaders' increasing focus on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes and the rising levels of accountability leaders place on class teachers. However, some of the most able disadvantaged pupils are not on track to reach the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers use a range of practical resources to skilfully demonstrate and deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts. As a result, pupils competently use their numeracy skills to carry out calculations. Although teachers ask probing questions to gauge pupils' understanding, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematics knowledge to solve real-life problems or develop their reasoning skills.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years provision is well led. The team plans topics and lessons that inspire and engage the children. This results in a learning environment that is filled with enthusiasm and staff who are highly motivated to drive further improvement.
- Children are helped to settle into their school lives promptly and effectively. Positive relationships are established between the school and parents. As a result, children are confident, curious learners who are eager to explore new ideas and challenges.
- Both indoor and outdoor learning environments are bright and stimulating and encourage good language development. Adults skilfully question children to deepen their thinking and understanding. Displays, including those about phonics, are child friendly and support children's learning.
- All adults are alert to the developing learning needs of the children, often responding quickly to the children's suggestions and emerging interests.
- Most children enter Reception with skills at typical levels for their age. By the time they leave Reception, a high proportion of children are working at good levels of development. As a result, they are well prepared for Year 1.
- Those children who are disadvantaged and supported through the pupil premium funding make strong and rapid gains.
- Safeguarding procedures are effective and statutory responsibilities are met.



## School details

Unique reference number	100425
Local authority	Islington
Inspection number	10023586

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	441
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lisa McCrindle
Headteacher	Jenny Lewis
Telephone number	020 7607 4162
Website	<a href="http://www.thornhill.islington.sch.uk">www.thornhill.islington.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:thornhill@thornhill.islington.sch.uk">thornhill@thornhill.islington.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Thornhill Primary school is larger than most primary schools.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress.
- There is a breakfast club and after-school clubs for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across all classes within the school. Many of these were with senior leaders.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the senior leadership team, members of staff, a representative from the local authority, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors also met with eight members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- Observations were made of pupils' behaviour at the beginning of the day, at lunchtime, breaktime, in lessons and at before- and after-school clubs.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance, the school's information on pupils' outcomes, reports on the quality of teaching, governors' minutes and the school development plan.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and looked at examples of their work in books and on display.
- Inspectors took account of the 113 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, as well as speaking to parents directly. There were no responses from staff or from pupils to questionnaires about the school.

## Inspection team

Jenell Chetty, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Hawkes	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Moller	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)

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