

Thorndown Primary School

Hill Rise, St Ives, Cambridgeshire PE27 6SE

Inspection dates

26–27 April 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	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is led by an inspirational headteacher. She is supported well by a very able senior leadership team. Together, they have secured rapid improvement in the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes over the last two years.
- Teamwork is strong across the school. Staff and the governing body have worked together to make the needed improvements in provision. Governors provide good challenge and support to other school leaders.
- Teaching is now good. Across the school, teachers get on very well with pupils. They have high expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- Teachers make school fun. They plan work that motivates and inspires pupils to do well. Occasionally, they do not provide enough challenge to the ablest pupils when they are ready to have their learning moved on.
- Early years provision is good. Children make good progress in both the pre-school and Reception classes. Teachers have a good understanding of the needs of children. They plan engaging activities that help children to learn quickly.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and consequently make good progress.
- Pupils behave well. They are polite and courteous. They feel safe and show good concern for the needs of others.
- Pupils work hard but do not always take enough care to ensure that their handwriting is neat and tidy.
- Outcomes for pupils are good. As well as making rapid progress in English and mathematics, pupils develop good skills in French, music and art.
- In science, history and geography, pupils' work is not of such a consistently high quality. The curriculum in these subjects gives too little attention to the development of subject-specific skills.
- The happy atmosphere in school reflects the way that leaders value and respect all members of the school community so that all feel part of the push for continued excellence.
- Parents are very positive about the school. They are complimentary about the high level of care shown by school staff and feel extremely well involved in their children's education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of pupils' work in science, geography and history by ensuring that topics in these subjects are studied in sufficient detail to enable pupils to develop the expected skills more quickly.
- Ensure that teachers respond quickly to move learning on when the most able have finished their work or have successfully grasped a concept and are ready for the next step.
- Ensure that pupils understand the value of neat handwriting and producing their best work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The school is led exceptionally well by the headteacher. She is given good support by an able senior leadership team. They responded decisively to the outcomes of the previous inspection and have secured rapid improvement in all aspects of the school's work. Together, they have established a culture of high expectations that has helped to improve both the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- There has been a relentless drive for improvement over the last two years. This has been based on a very good understanding of the main priorities.
- Teachers are very positive about recent changes. They embrace developments such as those recently implemented in mathematics because they know that leaders have researched and trialled them thoroughly before taking them on for the whole school.
- Leaders have very thorough systems for checking the quality of provision. Where they identify weaknesses, they tackle them quickly. For example, after a dip in attainment in reading at the end of Year 6 in 2016, leaders implemented a number of strategies to improve how well it was being taught. These have been effective in getting pupils back on track so that reading is no longer a comparative weakness.
- Leaders have a good track record for improving teaching. They set teachers challenging targets but also give them support and training where needed. Teachers are becoming increasingly reflective about their own work and they willingly share good practice with their colleagues.
- The role of middle leaders has been greatly strengthened since the previous inspection. Team leaders who manage year groups or pre-school provision clearly understand their roles. They observe lessons to check that pupils make good progress, and use information gleaned from this, data analysis and other activities to identify where provision can be improved further.
- Subject leadership has been especially effective in English and mathematics in securing the required improvements. In science, history and geography, leaders are relatively new to their roles and although they have made a start to improving provision their impact thus far is less strong.
- The physical education sports premium has made a positive difference to pupils' health and well-being. It funds a broad range of experiences such as specialist sports coaches as well as additional clubs and training for staff. Pupils are very positive about the opportunities that they get to try out new sports such as archery, fencing and orienteering.
- The curriculum is enriched well by an exciting range of clubs, visits and visitors. These contribute greatly to pupils' enjoyment of school. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in other areas of learning. Initiatives to improve the curriculum such as recent changes in mathematics are well considered and are based on a clear understanding of how they will help to improve outcomes for pupils.
- Pupils' creativity is promoted well through art and music, but in science, history and

geography, the curriculum does not focus well enough on developing skills as well as knowledge. Consequently, work in these subjects is not yet as consistently good as it is in English and mathematics.

- The school successfully promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The strong focus on pupils' personal development is particularly effective in developing their positive relationships with each other and with staff, and their kindness, resilience and thoughtfulness. Pupils learn about democracy through the school council and in philosophy lessons when they discuss complex moral issues. Leaders ensure that there is a strong emphasis on teaching pupils about cultural diversity. As a result, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school has very strong partnership with parents. Virtually all parents who responded to Parent View would recommend the school to others. They like being able to come into school for 'Open Classrooms and Workshops' where they can look at their children's work. They are particularly positive about the caring and nurturing atmosphere in school, typically making comments such as, 'The teachers not only push my children but encourage, motivate and inspire them' and 'The caring attitude of staff is brilliant.'

Governance of the school

- The governing body has played a key role in securing the required improvements since the previous inspection. Governors share the headteacher's ambitions for the school and have supported her well over the last two years.
- Governors ensure that they are not over-reliant on information from the headteacher about school effectiveness. They have established their own very thorough systems for monitoring provision. This means that they have a very clear understanding of the main priorities.
- Governors receive regular progress reports for all groups of children, including those supported by the pupil premium. They ask challenging questions of school leaders about the impact of their actions to improve pupil achievement. They ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils or for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used to good effect.
- Governors have a good understanding of how teachers' pay relates to performance. They set rigorous targets for the headteacher and review these regularly. They know how the school has improved teaching since the previous inspection and ensure that action is taken if teaching is not good enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school has thorough systems for keeping pupils safe. Staff training is regularly updated so that they are clear about current guidance and the school's expectations.
- Leaders have ensured that staff are aware of the need to look out for the potential radicalisation of pupils. They are very clear about what they should do if they have a concern.

- Leaders are persistent in their pursuit of support for vulnerable pupils. They work closely with outside agencies when circumstances show that this is needed. Parents are very pleased with the culture of safety in the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection.
- Teachers plan work that is fun and engaging. They make good use of resources to bring subjects alive and to make learning purposeful. They manage behaviour very effectively, ensuring that their expectations are well understood by pupils and are followed.
- Pupils develop positive attitudes towards learning because relationships with their teachers are exceptionally strong. Teachers ensure that pupils understand the purpose of their work and what they are expected to learn. They make good use of probing questioning to check pupils' understanding and to identify any misconceptions. The sensitive way that they tackle mistakes ensures that pupils can work without fear of failure. As one pupil commented, 'Sometimes we learn best, when we go wrong.'
- Teachers have good subject knowledge in English and mathematics. They introduce skilfully new ideas in English, ensuring that there is a good focus on checking that pupils with English as an additional language understand new vocabulary. Teachers make phonics fun by, for example, using song and rhymes to reinforce learning.
- In mathematics, teachers use the correct terminology all of the time and plan work that successfully deepens pupils' knowledge and skills in areas such as reasoning and problem solving.
- Teachers plan work that usually provides the right level of challenge for the most able, but occasionally, they do not intervene quickly enough when a higher-attaining pupil is ready for the next stage in their learning or has completed a task.
- Teachers celebrate pupils' achievement through the good use of praise and by displaying work in classrooms. This enables pupils to take pride in what they have accomplished. However, on occasions, teachers too readily accept untidy handwriting that is not the pupils' best work.
- Specialist teachers in subjects such as music, art and French have a very positive effect on learning. Skilled teaching assistants also play a key part in pupils' good progress. They are well trained and work extremely closely with teachers to plan work and to assess pupils' learning. Their support is particularly helpful in ensuring that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- Parents are very pleased with the quality of teaching in school. They support the school well by hearing their children read at home or helping them with homework.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are good ambassadors for the school in their attitudes towards learning and the care and kindness they show to each other. For example, pupils who join the school during the school year say that they settle so quickly because, 'Everyone is so kind and caring.'
- Pupils are proud of their work and happily celebrate each other's achievements. They are keen to do well and take good care with their work most of the time. However, not all pupils, especially some boys, take enough care to ensure that they write neatly.
- The school ensures that pupils know how to stay safe and manage risk. They are aware of how to stay safe online or when they are out and about in the community. Younger pupils explain with confidence how to avoid danger when crossing roads. The older pupils talk knowledgeably about the potential pitfalls of using social media.
- School records show that there is very little bullying and pupils confirm this. They report that any other sort of 'falling out' is rare, but that if it does happen, it is tackled very quickly. Pupils say that there is always someone to talk to if they have a worry. They are very confident that they will always be listened to by staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well when moving around school or playing together at breaktimes. Pupils are well supervised at break and lunchtime. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive.
- Pupils like the school's rewards systems and they feel that they are applied fairly by staff. They take great delight in receiving a 'Headteacher's Award' or a team token.
- Pupils are polite and courteous and extremely welcoming to visitors. They cooperate sensibly in lessons. They work hard most of the time, although they sometimes do not concentrate well enough when they are unclear about what they have to do or have finished their work.
- Pupils greatly enjoy school, and rates of attendance are slightly above average in the current year. The school is diligent in following up absences. Staff work closely with outside agencies to support families where attendance is not yet regular enough.
- Parents, pupils and staff all indicate that behaviour is good. Parents say that their children are safe and happy at school, typically making comments such as, 'Every day our child runs to the school gate with a smile on his face' and 'My son really enjoys attending pre-school because it is a fun place for him to learn.'

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils' progress has improved since the previous inspection. They are now making good progress across the school and developing new skills and understanding quickly most of the time. Weaknesses identified in reading in national testing at the end of Year 6 in 2016 have been tackled extremely effectively and attainment is much improved in the current year.

- Pupils read and write confidently. Pupils develop a love of reading and the recent focus on teaching skills such as inference and comprehension has been very successful. Pupils write enthusiastically in different subjects, showing a good sense of audience and a good understanding of basic grammar and punctuation rules.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of phonics, with almost all reaching the expected level in national screenings by the end of Year 2 in 2016. Pupils, including those who find reading more difficult, use their phonics skills confidently to break down words in order to help them read.
- In mathematics, younger pupils count confidently. By Year 6, pupils have well developed skills. They are able to explain the strategies they need to use to solve problems and they have good reasoning skills. Their recall of number facts is good.
- Disadvantaged pupils or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well. Teachers give them work that is matched to their needs and helps them to make good progress most of the time. Similarly, the progress of the most able is generally good, although it sometimes slows when teachers do not adapt work quickly enough to their needs when they have grasped a skill or concept.
- It is not just in English and mathematics that pupils make good progress. They develop good levels of competency in French by Year 6. In music, pupils develop a wide range of skills, showing a good sense of rhythm when African drumming and singing tunefully in music lessons. In art, displays and work in lessons is of good quality. Pupils know about the styles of different artists. They make good use of different techniques when painting, drawing or modelling.
- While progress is good in most subjects and especially so in English and mathematics, pupils do not always produce the same high quality of work in science, history and geography. Work in these subjects does not always ensure that pupils develop an appropriate range of scientific, geographical or historical skills commensurate with their ability.

Early years provision

Good

- Children are well prepared both socially and academically for life in Year 1. The proportion reaching a good level of development was broadly average in 2016, reflecting good progress from children's different starting points.
- Children acquire new skills quickly in both pre-school and the Reception classes because they are taught well. Teachers ensure that learning is fun and engaging. The adults miss no opportunity to extend the children's language skills through conversation or discussion that is intended to help children think and talk about their learning. This ensures that children with English as an additional language are able to settle quickly and make good progress in improving their speaking skills.
- In the Reception classes, teachers focus especially well on introducing early writing skills. They plan writing into both indoor and outdoor activities and encourage children to write for many different purposes. For example, children happily note-take after listening to a talk about rabbits or volunteer to write a story after playing a computer game.
- In both pre-school and the Reception classes, teachers use the well-resourced outdoor

areas extremely effectively to support learning. They encourage children to explore their own ideas and to take risks. For example, during the inspection, children decided to set up their own water chute using a slide and a mud puddle. Adults used this activity to promote children's physical development and to teach them about personal safety and the importance of cooperating.

- Across the early years, adults listen to the children and ask questions that help them extend their understanding. However, at times, these questions are not probing enough to extend the learning of the most able children to full effect.
- Children behave well. They are extremely happy and support each other very sensibly. In the pre-school, adults give children particularly calm and sensitive support to help them settle when they start school.
- Children show perseverance in their learning because they are interested in what they are doing. They are active and inquisitive learners who work well together and are happy to share. They are well supervised in a safe environment. Child protection and safeguarding arrangements are effective.
- Provision is well led and managed. Leaders ensure that additional funding for disadvantaged children is used to good effect. Since the pre-school became part of the school, leaders have improved the quality of teaching and outcomes for children in the setting extremely quickly. Parents of pre-school children are very positive about these changes.
- Leaders set high expectations for staff across the early years. They monitor provision very carefully and accurately identify what still needs to be improved. For example, their analysis of data has shown that not enough children yet reach the higher levels by the end of the Reception Year. They are already adapting provision to improve this.
- Adults engage extremely well with children's families. Information is shared with parents frequently and they are regularly invited into school. Consequently, parents are very pleased with early years provision. They typically make comments such as, 'I cannot praise the staff in pre-school enough for their time and dedication' and 'My child goes to school happy and leaves smiling and giggling.'

School details

Unique reference number	136814
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10031365

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	492
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Newton
Headteacher	Vicci Godbold
Telephone number	01480 375103
Website	www.thorndownprimaryschool.co.uk/
Email address	office@thorndown.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 April 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a larger-than-average sized primary school with 19 classes. Children in the early years are taught in three Reception classes and in a pre-school. The school took over management of the pre-school in September 2016.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds but the school is admitting more pupils with English as an additional language than in the past. Most of these pupils are from Eastern European backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is broadly average.

- The school met the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in lessons, many of which were observed jointly with the headteacher or other members of the senior leadership team. In addition, the inspectors made some short visits to observe learning at other times.
- Discussions were held with pupils, staff, representatives from the local authority, and members of the governing body.
- The inspectors took account of letters from parents as well as the views of 173 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also talked with parents at the start of the school day.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read, looked at their work and school documents, including: the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; the school development plan; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding information; and health and safety documentation.
- The inspectors analysed responses to inspection questionnaires from 50 members of staff.

Inspection team

Mike Capper, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Linda Allison	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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