

Thirsk Community Primary School

Hambleton Place, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 1SL

Inspection dates

6 and 15 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not been quick enough to tackle some long-standing weaknesses. Leaders' actions are only just beginning to take effect.
- Leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inaccurate. The checks they make on the quality of teaching and learning are sometimes superficial.
- Over time, too many pupils have not reached the standard of which they should be capable, especially in learning to read. This continues to be the case.
- Too many pupils who have fallen behind in their learning do not catch up quickly enough.
- The progress of the most able pupils is inconsistent because teachers, too often, do not challenge them well enough.
- The quality of teaching is not consistently effective in a number of classes and in a wide range of subjects. Therefore, pupils' progress is too variable, including the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- By the end of the early years, too many children are not ready for learning in Year 1. This is because the quality of provision in the Reception Year does not challenge them well enough.
- The curriculum, though broad and balanced, does not give pupils enough opportunity to practise their writing and mathematics in a range of subjects, limiting pupils' progress.
- Governors have an inaccurate, overly positive view of the quality of teaching and of pupils' outcomes.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' behaviour. Pupils display positive attitudes to learning. They show respect for adults and each other.
- Leaders clearly identify the needs of pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) keeps a close eye on the progress of these pupils.
- Leaders actively promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.
- Teachers' building of pupils' vocabulary throughout the school is a particular strength of teaching.
- Pupils enjoy high levels of involvement in physical education and sport.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - keeping more meticulous records and analysing this information to more precisely identify weaknesses and what needs to improve
 - more sharply identifying the specific impact of teaching on pupils' learning when making checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
 - making sure that all subject leaders more accurately assess the impact of their work
 - ensuring that governors become more effective in their duties and develop a more accurate view of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Raise the attainment of disadvantaged pupils, the most able and those who need to catch up, in all subjects and especially in reading, by:
 - increasing the consistency in the quality of teaching so that rates of pupils' progress are less variable
 - making, more consistently, effective use of assessments of pupils' prior learning when planning learning activities
 - making sure that teachers, more consistently, check pupils' learning in lessons to identify where teaching is too easy or too hard
 - improving the teaching of phonics in the early years and in key stage 1, and the acquisition of pupils' knowledge to support their reading skills in key stage 2
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their developing knowledge in English and mathematics across a wide range of subjects.
- Increase the progress children make in the early years, so that at least most of them are ready for learning in Year 1, by:
 - improving the quality of interaction between adults and children so that children maintain interest, speak at greater length and are more challenged in their play and exploration
 - improving the quality and arrangement of resources in the Reception classes
 - reviewing and checking the assessment of children as they enter the early years and ensuring an accurate picture of what they know and can do.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders did not begin to tackle weaknesses in the early years and in pupils' outcomes in reading soon enough, despite clear signs of weaknesses in these aspects. Consequently, too many pupils still do not reach the expected standard in reading by the time they leave school and too many do not make a good level of development in the early years.
- The checks leaders make on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment do not shine a bright enough light on the specific impact of teaching on learning. For this reason, leaders' evaluation of the quality of teaching is overly positive. Inconsistency in the quality of teaching over time has led to too much variability in the progress of groups of pupils.
- The training of teachers has brought about some improvements in teaching. However, some gaps remain in teachers' knowledge. For example, inspectors identified flaws in the systematic teaching of phonics and in how teachers help pupils transfer their knowledge acquired in mathematics and English lessons to their work in other subjects.
- Leaders do not analyse well enough the information they collect about pupils' behaviour and attendance, and, sometimes, about pupils' achievement. Many records at the start of the inspection were poorly organised, making it difficult for leaders to analyse the information.
- The headteacher has successfully increased the number of teachers able to take on leadership responsibility and secured training for some of these. However, subject leaders do not have a fully accurate picture of the quality of teaching and the progress and standards of key groups of pupils across the age range. They are, nevertheless, conscientious and active in their responsibilities. Their knowledge and skills require further development.
- The SENCo carefully identifies the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. She is well organised and keeps a close eye on the attendance, behaviour and progress of these pupils. Funding for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is largely used effectively.
- The spending of the pupil premium has had limited impact on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils over time. Progress is variable across year groups and subjects. In some year groups and subjects, the difference in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others is growing rather than diminishing. However, some effective work by additional teachers is beginning to have a positive effect in some classes.
- On joining the school, following the last inspection, the headteacher prioritised the improvement of pupils' behaviour, establishing a positive culture and improved conditions for learning.
- The actions of senior leaders have resulted in some improvements in teaching over time. The very weakest teaching has been eradicated. As a result, attainment in key stage 1 has risen and modest improvements have been made in progress in mathematics across the school. In 2017, progress by the end of key stage 2 in writing was particularly strong.

- Although teachers and pupils were unprepared for the replacement national curriculum in 2014, leaders have introduced a revised and more suitable curriculum. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and balanced. However, learning in some subjects and year groups lacks depth, with teachers not challenging pupils well enough.
- Leaders have made judicious use of the sport premium. This has made an enormous contribution to pupils' engagement and involvement in sports and physical education (PE).
- The local authority's evaluation of pupils' outcomes over time has been overgenerous. The local authority did not identify some significant weaknesses.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has a too optimistic and inaccurate view of the school's performance. Although governors have appropriately challenged leaders in a number of areas, they believe that teaching is better than it is. They had underestimated the extent of pupils' underperformance over time. They too readily accept leaders' assertions, and their own checks have not revealed some weaknesses.
- There has been considerable turnover in the staffing of the governing body recently, so some governors are new to their roles. They bring suitable skills and experience to the table. They are undertaking training and learning their responsibilities.
- The loss of some governors, including the governor who was previously responsible for safeguarding, means that governors are not as certain as they should be about the school's safeguarding arrangements. They have begun to check the school's arrangements to keep children safe, but were not aware of some weaknesses identified during the inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The lead inspector, on the first day of the inspection, identified some potentially serious concerns about safeguarding practice. In addition, records were not well organised and this made it difficult for school leaders to properly monitor the safety of pupils for whom there were concerns. By the second day of the inspection, over a week later, leaders had taken the advice of the local authority designated officer, put a robust action plan in place, improved the organisation of records and satisfactorily resolved inspectors' concerns.
- Leaders make sure that the proper safety checks are made when staff are recruited, and the record of these checks is complete, although presented in a way that makes it time-consuming for responsible persons, such as governors, to check.
- Staff have undertaken training, understand their duties and take appropriate action when they have concerns about pupils' safety. For example, adults know what the signs are that a pupil may be at risk of radicalisation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Over time, despite some improvements, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been inconsistent and remains so. This has led to patchy progress for groups of pupils, including the disadvantaged and the most able. Teachers' expectations of what pupils of different abilities ought to be able to do are generally not high enough.
- Across year groups and in different subjects, the extent to which teachers make effective use of information about what pupils already know is variable. This means that, too often, work set is too easy or too hard for some pupils. Furthermore, the effectiveness in the way teachers check pupils' learning during lessons also varies too much. This results, for example, in pupils practising work that they do not need.
- The teaching of phonics lacks rigour. In the past, too many pupils did not meet the required standard in phonics by the end of Year 1. This improved in 2017, but teaching is such that it is not securing rapid enough progress for some pupils. Teachers have recently organised reading books so that they are better matched to pupils' developing phonic knowledge.
- The quality of the teaching of reading in key stage 2 is inconsistent and largely limited in its effectiveness. In reading lessons, pupils who are not working with an adult are sometimes given work that is unchallenging, so does not help them to make progress in their reading. Teaching of groups is more effective in some classes than in others. Overall, teaching does not help pupils who have fallen behind to catch up at a fast enough rate. There has been some recent encouraging improvement for disadvantaged pupils who receive additional support with reading.
- Although the progress of last year's Year 6 cohort in writing was very strong, the development of pupils' writing across the school is not consistently strong. In particular, pupils' knowledge and understanding of grammar as a means to construct sentences that are more effective are not well developed. This is because of weaknesses in the knowledge of some teachers. However, teachers across the age range are adept at building pupils' vocabulary and this is making a growing contribution to pupils' reading and writing.
- Teaching in a range of other subjects is also variable, although it is stronger in mathematics, where teachers help pupils enjoy developing their reasoning skills and solving mathematical problems.
- Strong relationships between teachers and pupils contribute to pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour in their lessons. Where teaching is more inspiring and purposeful, pupils are most strongly engaged and make greater gains in their learning. Where teaching is less interesting, pupils do not work as hard.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils display positive attitudes to learning. This is seen, for example, in the neat presentation of their work and in the way they enjoy discussions about their learning.
- The 'five golden rules' successfully promote pupils' respect and responsibility.
- Leaders and teachers actively promote the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of pupils. This prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. For example, pupils enjoy learning about the major world religions. Pupils undertook a mock general election and they vote for their representatives on the school council, so have some insight into democracy. Pupils regularly raise money for a range of charities.
- Pupils have faith and confidence in adults to look after them well. Pupils value the 'check-in' each day, where they are able to share their feelings and any worries they may have. Pupils have the vocabulary to talk about their feelings.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. Bullying is not commonplace, and when it does occur, pupils are satisfied that adults deal with it well.
- Adults teach pupils how to stay safe and healthy. For example, pupils learn how to manage the risks of social-networking and other online activity. Most pupils are regularly involved in a range of sporting activities.
- Adults actively teach pupils about such attributes as perseverance and resilience, and many pupils demonstrate these qualities. This makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning. However, occasionally, where teaching does not sufficiently inspire pupils, pupils do not maintain interest and engagement.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Behaviour has improved considerably over the last few years, so conditions for learning are positive.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around the school, for example when they eat their lunch together and as they move around the school building. Adults and pupils maintain an orderly, well-maintained environment. Disruptions to teaching and learning are rare.
- Leaders have successfully eliminated the previously high levels of exclusion. This is due to the effective management of the behaviour of the few pupils who find it difficult to control their behaviour.
- Leaders' recording of behaviour incidents is scant. This means that leaders are not able to analyse trends and patterns that may help them to identify how to strengthen behaviour still further.
- Leaders take assertive action to address persistent absence, having a positive effect on the attendance of identified pupils. Effective work means that rates of absence remain below the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- By the time they leave key stage 2, too many pupils are unready for secondary school because they have not reached the required standard in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's own assessments and pupils' work suggest that this is likely to be the case again this year, despite a potentially modest improvement.

- Only half of the pupils in Year 6 last year reached the expected standard in reading and very few demonstrated greater depth in their reading.
- Progress in reading and mathematics in key stage 2, over the last few years, has been average, and not sufficient for pupils to make up lost ground from their unacceptably low starting points at the end of key stage 1.
- Pupils' attainment by the end of key stage 1 has risen. In 2017, standards were broadly in line with the national average, although there remained a considerable difference between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others. The difference in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others remains across the school, although there are some signs of green shoots of improvement.
- Teaching does not challenge the most able pupils consistently well. Pupils with high prior attainment at the beginning of key stage 1 and key stage 2 do not reach the high standards of which they should be capable, across all subjects. Historically, this is variable in English and mathematics.
- Pupils across the age range who have fallen behind because of previously very weak teaching largely do not make fast enough progress to catch up.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Over time, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the early years has been too low, regardless of their starting points when they enter the Nursery. Too few children are prepared for learning in Year 1. This is because of weak provision. Leaders have not been quick enough to address this issue.
- A new teacher was appointed to the Nursery in September 2017, and since then provision in the Nursery has greatly improved. There is a stark contrast between the quality of provision in the Nursery and that in Reception, where it remains weak despite new leadership. Too many children currently in Reception classes are not making sufficient progress.
- In the Nursery, children are well engaged and challenged in their play and exploration. The inside and outside spaces and resources are well organised, inviting and appealing. At best, areas are of high quality, enticing children to explore. Adults arrange resources in a way that makes appropriate demands on children. The range of provision addresses all areas of learning.
- Adults in the Nursery tend to spend much time observing and assessing children at the expense of teaching and interacting with them. When they do engage with children as they play and learn, the quality of interaction is variable. At best, adults model the language children need and ask children open questions to help them think. They encourage children to solve problems. Conversely, adults sometimes ask too many questions that require just one-word answers or do not give children time to answer before interrupting them.
- In the Reception classes, when children play and explore independently they are underchallenged. This is because resources are not organised to fire the imagination or to motivate children to explore. For example, the range of clothing for children to dress up in, in the role-play area, and the other tired resources are uninspiring.

- Children in the main Reception class largely do not learn to manage their own behaviour because adults control too much of what they do, stifling independence. On the other hand, in the Nursery, children are successfully encouraged to be independent. They collaborate and cooperate. Children in the Reception Year do behave well and follow the instructions of adults. Given the opportunity, they work well together.
- In the main Reception class, adults occasionally keep children sitting in one place for too long, so they become restless, especially when the teaching does not interest them or because adults talk too much.
- Too few children in the Reception Year are making good progress in their writing. Adults do systematically build children's vocabulary, however, which is likely to make a positive contribution to their reading and writing as they develop. Children learn to match letters to sounds and begin to blend these together to read words.
- Assessments of children as they enter the Nursery have not been checked for accuracy by school leaders or external professionals and may not be reliable.
- Adults' copious, recorded assessments in the children's 'learning journey' folders tend to be more descriptive than evaluative. However, a new electronic assessment system is improving the quality of assessment, and most parents and carers are accessing and beginning to contribute to this.
- Warm relationship with adults help children to feel safe. Safeguarding arrangements are effective.

School details

Unique reference number	121365
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10042347

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	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	267
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Duffey
Headteacher	Richard Chandler
Telephone number	01845 524349
Website	www.thirsk-pri.n-yorks.sch.uk/
Email address	admin@thirsk-pri.n-yorks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	4–5 February 2014

Information about this school

- Thirsk Community Primary School is an average-sized primary school.
- Fewer than one in ten pupils speak English as an additional language and most are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is broadly in line with the national average.
- The school is one of nine primary schools in the North Yorkshire local authority that has a specialist team to meet the needs of children experiencing social, emotional and mental health difficulties. Currently, none of the pupils in the school is accessing this provision. The governing body is not responsible for this provision.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 28 lessons, visiting all classes, some with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, and most of the teachers and middle leaders. Inspectors questioned other adults about their safeguarding duties.
- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of governors and the vice-chair. He also met with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised work from a sample of pupils' workbooks. They met formally with pupils to find out what it is like to be a pupil at the school, chatted informally with many pupils, and took account of 35 responses to the online pupil survey. They observed pupils in assembly, as they ate their lunch and as they played in the school grounds.
- Documents were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation document, school improvement plan, notes of leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, governing board minutes, and notes of local authority representatives' visits to the school. Safeguarding records were examined.
- Inspectors considered the responses of 29 members of staff to the online staff survey, 18 responses to the online parent survey, Parent View, and nine written responses from parents.

Inspection team

Philip Riozzi, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joan Hewitt	Ofsted Inspector
Natasha Greenough	Ofsted Inspector
Tim Scargill	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.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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 children looked after, 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/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.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2018