

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 May 2018

Mr Graham Clegg
Headteacher
Thurlby Community Primary School
Crown Lane
Thurlby
Bourne
Lincolnshire
PE10 0EZ

Dear Mr Clegg

Short inspection of Thurlby Community Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 9 May 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2013.

Based on the evidence gathered during this short inspection, I have identified some priorities for improvement which I advise the school to address. In light of these priorities, the school's next inspection will be a full section 5 inspection. **There is no change to the school's current overall effectiveness grade of good as a result of this inspection.**

Thurlby Community Primary School is a smaller-than-average-sized primary school. It is a friendly, welcoming place to learn. You and your staff have ensured that pupils enjoy their learning and are well cared for. As a result, pupils are happy and the majority of parents and carers are supportive. For example, one parent stated, 'My child is my third child at this school and they have all been really happy. It's a lovely, positive environment.' Another parent praised the way her children have developed since they recently moved to the school: 'Their confidence has improved greatly and they have both developed secure friendships and trust in their abilities.'

Relationships between adults and pupils are good. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school. They are respectful and behave well. Consequently, they are enthusiastic learners. For example, one Year 5 pupil told me how her class were reading the book 'Street Child' as their class text, based on their thematic learning about the Victorians. She explained how her analysis of the text and discussion with her friends about the quality of language used to describe characters and scenes has helped her to use empathy in her own writing. She wrote, 'I can feel the excruciating pain in my arms and back because the broom I am sweeping with is too tall in my hands.'

Members of the governing body visit the school regularly to check on the progress of leaders' actions. They have a good understanding of their roles. They are aware of their responsibilities and are ambitious for the school. They are realistic in their appraisal of aspects in which they need to improve. They recognise that they have not addressed the area for improvement identified for them at the last inspection. Governors have accessed training to better understand school performance information but this was not successful. Consequently, governors are not as effective as they could be in their use of school information to challenge and hold leaders to account for the progress of different groups of pupils.

Since the previous inspection, the pace of improvement has not been as quick as it could be. You have accurately identified the broad areas in which the school needs to improve. Your improvement plans, however, are not sharply focused to enable leaders to measure the impact of actions precisely and to hold staff more effectively to account for the progress of pupils.

The areas for improvement identified at the last inspection have only partly been dealt with. Improved teaching strategies have ensured that pupils of different abilities are more challenged in their learning. Nevertheless, from my scrutiny of pupils' work it was clear that this is not yet consistent across all year groups. During our tour of the school together, it was evident that pupils get regular opportunities to work on their own as well as with their peers. You have accessed good quality training for teaching assistants to improve the quality of support they provide for pupils. I observed teaching assistants supporting learning very effectively in lessons. This enabled pupils to make good gains in their learning.

During the last year there have been substantial changes in the middle leadership team due to two members of staff, one of whom is the deputy headteacher, taking maternity leave. These leaders have responsibility for English and mathematics.

Safeguarding is effective.

You have created a good culture of safeguarding within the school. Staff and governors benefit from regular relevant training on child protection. They know what to do to keep pupils safe. You work with families and refer concerns in a timely manner. Staff are vigilant and are prepared to take decisive action when needed to secure pupils' well-being. Leaders have ensured that all safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say they feel safe. They say that incidents of poor behaviour or bullying do sometimes happen but when they occur staff deal with issues quickly and fairly. Pupils feel well cared for by staff in the school. One pupil told me that Thurlby is 'a welcoming school where we all look after one another'. Pupils are taught about potential risks and how to stay safe in different situations. These include how to use the internet safely and the dangers from crossing the road and riding a bicycle.

A small number of parents raised concerns about the school's use of the sports field. You have recently reviewed the safety procedures to ensure that they are effective. During the inspection, it was clear that pupils are well supervised when using the site. Staff and pupils are aware of the boundaries and risks. The school works closely with the local authority to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

Inspection findings

- A focus for the inspection was the quality of the teaching of reading. In 2017, the progress pupils made in their reading by the time they left the school at the end of Year 6 was in the bottom 10% of schools nationally. Leaders accessed good-quality training for staff and promote the importance of daily reading at school. They plan opportunities for pupils to develop their reading skills through their learning in other areas of the curriculum.
- Although attainment in reading at the end of key stage 1 and key stage 2 improved in 2017, leaders' actions to improve the rates of progress pupils make are not precisely focused. Leaders do not rigorously evaluate the impact of their actions to make sure that more pupils, including the most able and those who are disadvantaged, are making good progress in their reading.
- In 2017, the progress made by pupils by the end of Year 6 was well below the national average in reading and below national averages in writing and mathematics. Although some middle leaders spoken to during the inspection demonstrated strong leadership skills, it was not possible to assess the true capacity of the English and mathematics leaders to improve the progress of pupils.
- Historically, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year has been above the national average. However, over the past four years this has steadily declined and, in 2017, it declined to below the national average. The early years leader explained to me how the needs of children who enter the Reception Year are changing. Greater proportions of children now enter the school with knowledge and skills that are lower than in previous years. However, the leader does not have sharply focused plans in place to ensure that teaching and the curriculum in the early years sufficiently meet the changing needs of the children, to enable them to make better progress.
- You and I discussed the progress of disadvantaged pupils. The variability in number of pupils and range of abilities in different year groups makes year-on-year comparisons of pupils' attainment difficult. You check regularly to ensure that the progress of these pupils is at least good. Where it is not, you provide additional support to help pupils catch up. However, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is not tracked as precisely as it could be. Governors are not able to evaluate the impact of leaders' actions effectively and ensure that these pupils make good progress and attain as well as their peers.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they more precisely measure the impact of their actions to enable them to take steps to help pupils to make better progress by the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics
- the governing body is more effective in holding leaders to account for the progress of different groups of pupils in different year groups and subjects
- middle and subject leaders are clear about their roles and responsibilities to raise standards
- they continue their work to ensure that teachers consistently challenge pupils who have different abilities to do their best, particularly in reading, writing and mathematics
- there is a clear plan in place to meet the needs of children entering the early years more precisely and promptly, to enable them to make better progress
- the progress of disadvantaged pupils is explicitly tracked so that leaders, including governors, have a more accurate understanding of the impact of the additional funding on pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Lincolnshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Stephanie Innes-Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector

Information about the inspection

During the inspection I met with you and the coordinator for special educational needs and/or disabilities and briefly met with the deputy headteacher who was in school as part of her phased return to work after maternity leave. I also met with the interim leaders for English and the leader for the early years. I discussed safeguarding arrangements with you. I spoke with parents at the beginning of the school day and I met with a group of pupils. I met with the chair of the governing body and had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.

You and I visited classrooms together. I looked at a range of pupils' work. We discussed the progress of different groups of pupils and the school's plans for improvement. I considered the responses of 31 parents to Ofsted's online survey Parent View. There were no responses to Ofsted's online survey for staff or pupils. I scrutinised evidence from a range of documents, including leaders' evaluation of the

school's current performance, procedures and records for safeguarding and behaviour, information on how the pupil premium is spent, an analysis of attendance and a number of policy documents. I observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school.