

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234
www.gov.uk/ofsted



16 July 2018

Mrs Catherine Jones
Headteacher
Thorney Close Primary School
Torquay Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR3 4BB

Dear Mrs Jones

Short inspection of Thorney Close Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 5 July 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 November 2013.

This school continues to be good.

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have established a calm, purposeful ethos that allows pupils to feel safe and confident, enabling them to flourish. You know your school well and your enthusiasm and dedication to secure the very best outcomes for all pupils remain a strength.

You and your team have established a shared ambition for continuous improvement through investing in personalised professional development for staff. As part of your regular monitoring programme, all staff receive timely and constructive feedback and are supported effectively to improve their practice. At the same time, you do not shy away from difficult decisions to hold staff to account fully. As a result, staff are very appreciative of the opportunities you give them to extend their skills in different aspects of the school.

Pupils' progress is closely tracked and reviewed on a regular basis and shared with governors. Regular moderation within school and with external partners lends an accuracy to school tracking information. Leaders and teachers know their pupils very well. Progress reviews inform future improvement activities and help teachers to plan interventions to support underachieving pupils.

Pupils currently make good progress in school from entry into the early years through to leaving at the end of Year 6. Pupils achieve good outcomes in key stage 1 and attainment at the expected standard was above the national average in 2017. However, you and your staff are aware that the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth at key stage 1, in mathematics in particular, needs to increase further. In key stage 2, pupils continue to achieve good outcomes. In 2017, the

proportion who achieved the expected, and also high, standard was at, or above, the national average.

At the time of the last inspection, you were asked to undertake a number of actions to improve the quality of teaching in school. One aspect was developing the capacity of relatively newly appointed middle leaders to monitor, evaluate and share effectively the strong teaching practice in school. Middle leaders, particularly those responsible for English and mathematics, are now responsible for the quality of teaching and learning within their own subject areas. In addition, they play a crucial role in measuring the impact of the school's action on pupil outcomes. They have also put in place additional support and guidance for staff and pupils as necessary. However, you recognise that there is further work to be done to ensure that all subject leaders have the opportunity to fully develop their leadership skills and expertise.

A further area of improvement was to make regular use of existing outstanding practice so that staff learn from each other. You have implemented a variety of approaches to enable staff to visit the lessons of colleagues and share each other's expertise, supported by a coaching programme. Through in-class work and mentoring, teachers have been able to learn from each other's practice and further develop the quality of their own teaching.

The governing body is made up of a committed group of individuals who bring a wide range of skills and expertise. They speak passionately about making sure that all pupils and their families are cared for and supported by the school. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They are appropriately challenging and visit the school regularly to check that the information given by leaders is accurate. Governors are very mindful of their safeguarding responsibilities and receive up-to-date training.

Your team's commitment to pupils' academic development is matched in their commitment to pupils' wider personal and social development. Pupils behave in a positive way and show great care and concern for each other. Pupils understand that good behaviour is more than following rules; they see that it is about positive attitudes and learning from any mistakes they make. Pupils are extremely polite and friendly and show a genuine interest in visitors to their school. They are eager to talk and share their learning and what they enjoy about it. There is a calm and orderly atmosphere around school and pupils arrive at lessons ready to learn. You work extremely well with outside agencies to provide appropriate support and guidance for the most vulnerable pupils and their families that come to your school.

Safeguarding is effective.

The safety, protection and care of pupils are of prime importance to you and your staff. Consequently, frequent and thorough staff and governor training takes place to ensure that all adults understand and execute their duties responsibly. Detailed checks are completed on all those who work at the school, to ensure that they are fit to do so. You and your leadership team have ensured that all safeguarding requirements are fit for purpose and records are detailed. Any concerns over pupils' welfare are pursued thoroughly and you and your staff are tenacious in making sure

agreed actions are carried out.

Pupils feel safe and very well supported. They are confident that they can talk to any adult in school for help. Pupils feel that bullying is rare in school and if it did happen, it would be tackled quickly and effectively by their teachers. Pupils also have a very good knowledge of how to stay safe online and are very clear as to when they can access different types of social media. Your school's focus on providing a safe and caring community supports pupils in feeling confident and secure.

Inspection findings

- The school has many strategies in place to encourage pupils' regular and punctual attendance. Leaders and governors work continuously to make sure everyone understands the importance of attending school through using a range of personalised approaches. This includes meeting with parents and carers, sharing attendance data at parents' evenings, sending out text messages and putting in place a robust and targeted system for tracking individual pupil attendance. You are especially tenacious in directly telephoning parents and their children to encourage them to come into school every day. You are very aware of the need to engage with parents on this area and work hard to support families in different ways to help their children attend school. Those pupils spoken to are very aware of the need to come to school so that they can learn and prepare themselves for future careers.
- As a result of closely targeted work and all staff being accountable for ensuring that pupils want to come to school, attendance has increased in line with the national average.
- Children are making a good start to their learning in the early years. From starting points below those expected for their age when they begin Nursery, they are increasingly making strong progress. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development by the end of Reception is improving every year. Leaders and teachers are aware of the need to further increase children's progress in writing due to a dip in 2017. It is a clear priority for the school and actions already taken are having a positive impact on children's learning.
- Children in the early years are excited about their writing and display pride in their achievements. For example, a child in Reception was able to talk about how they were going to adapt the story of 'The Tiger Who Came to Tea' including different animals and definitely adding 'cupcakes'! The indoor and outdoor environment for the early years promotes highly effective learning spaces for children to explore writing from initial mark making to producing their own independent sentences. Every opportunity is exploited to model and provide children with opportunities to develop their individual writing skills. As a result of the work of leaders and teachers, the proportion of children achieving the writing early learning goal has increased significantly at both the expected standard and exceeding.
- The proportion of pupils achieving at greater depth in 2017, at key stage 1, was

below the national average, particularly for reading and mathematics. Leaders and teachers quickly recognised this and put into place a range of support and guidance for both staff and pupils.

- When reading, pupils are increasingly challenged through the range of different texts they experience. They are regularly expected to justify their answers through using evidence from texts and building up their reading stamina. As a result, the percentage of pupils achieving at greater depth in reading has significantly improved.
- In mathematics, teachers have developed challenging problem-solving tasks for pupils which are linked to the type of text being read in English. For example, pupils in Year 1 were completing 'piratical' mathematical time problems linked to their work in English and also in preparation for a subsequent trip to a pirate ship.
- At key stage 1, the percentage of pupils currently working at greater depth in mathematics has increased due to the challenging tasks they are tackling in lessons. However, leaders are aware of the need to still further increase the percentage of pupils working at this standard, as it is below reading and writing.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- they continue to provide middle leaders with opportunities to develop their leadership skills, particularly those responsible for foundation subjects, to further develop the quality of teaching and learning
- the proportion of pupils reaching greater depth in mathematics in key stage 1 continues to increase.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Vernon
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, I met with you and members of your leadership team. I held a meeting with a group of pupils and talked to pupils less formally in lessons. I met with three members of the governing body, including the chair and vice-chair. I also met with the school improvement adviser. I met with the leads for early years, English and mathematics. I undertook a range of short visits to lessons, either with you or your assistant head, and a learning walk across all key stages. I also looked at pupils' work in books. I examined the school's self-evaluation document as well

as other documents, including assessment information, attendance information and pupil tracking. I examined the school website. I examined safeguarding documents, including the single central record and suitable checks on staff. I took account of five free-text responses from parents and 20 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire.