

Thatcham Park CofE Primary School

Park Avenue, Thatcham, Berkshire RG18 4NP

Inspection dates

27–28 November 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
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

- Strong leadership has ensured that standards in education have risen considerably at Thatcham Park. Most pupils are achieving well throughout the school.
- There is a palpable sense of community threaded through all aspects of life, with the school's core values integral to the family atmosphere.
- Governance is strong. Governors are adept at monitoring the effectiveness of leaders' actions. They have successfully strengthened their structure and membership to better support and challenge school leaders.
- The curriculum provides good breadth and coverage. Activities engage pupils' interest and fuel their enthusiasm for learning.
- Teaching is typically good throughout the school. The support provided by teaching assistants helps pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding. Pupils' creative flair is evident in art-related learning.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding. Staff provide excellent support for vulnerable families. The overall attendance of pupils is very high.
- Safeguarding is effective. Through their actions, leaders have created a vigilant culture that protects pupils from harm.
- Pupils learn how to look after themselves well. A range of additional learning experiences around safety equip pupils with the knowledge to keep themselves safe.
- The early years setting is good. Children achieve well and develop successfully their emerging skills. Behaviour in the setting is exemplary.
- Some disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, do not achieve as highly as other pupils nationally. Although this difference is diminishing, more needs to be achieved to ensure that these pupils make rapid progress from their starting points.
- Sometimes, learning in subjects other than English and mathematics is not challenging enough. As a result, some pupils, including those who are most able, do not achieve at the higher standards.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and pupils' outcomes further by ensuring that learning in all subjects is sufficiently challenging for all pupils.
- Improve outcomes by making sure that disadvantaged pupils, including the most able, achieve highly across the curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leadership is strong at Thatcham Park. The headteacher uses accurate self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness to provide very clear direction to drive improvement. She is ably supported by her talented and dedicated deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. Together, they are a dynamic team. Their hard work and commitment have ensured that standards of education have risen significantly over recent years.
- Leaders have developed a clear sense of community that threads throughout the school. Many people comment positively about this, including staff, governors, parents, carers, pupils and members of the school's parent-teacher association. Additionally, there are strong links between the school and the local church. Strong values, the family atmosphere, and a palpable sense of togetherness are strengths of the school.
- Leaders ensure that teaching is of a good quality throughout the school. Despite some turbulence in staffing, leaders have successfully ensured that the standard of teaching remains high. Leaders, including governors, are ambitious and have high expectations. They are working to ensure that most pupils achieve highly.
- The curriculum has been carefully planned. Leaders have created an effective framework for learning. This provides good progression for pupils' increasing knowledge and understanding across a range of subjects. Leaders keep curriculum plans under regular review and take pupils' interests into account when organising themes and topics.
- The work of subject coordinators impacts positively on standards of teaching and pupils' achievements. Coordinators have in-depth subject knowledge and demonstrate well the actions they take to improve provision throughout the school. They lead their areas of responsibility effectively.
- Leaders provide the right support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school's special educational needs coordinator, although new in post, has a clear overview of the needs of pupils with SEND and works well to monitor their provision and progress over time. The support strategies for pupils with SEND, including education, health and care plans, are clear, informative and implemented well by staff.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is particularly strong. Leaders plan a rich range of activities and experiences to enrich and deepen this aspect of pupils' learning. British values and the school's values of 'compassion, respect, wisdom, thankfulness, endurance and community' are embedded successfully in the daily life of the school. This ensures that pupils are ready for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders make good use of the pupil premium funding. They can demonstrate that disadvantaged pupils are achieving better than they have in the past but are ambitious for them to make still stronger progress. However, leaders acknowledge that their strategy for supporting this group of pupils needs further refinement, for example by ensuring that the most able disadvantaged pupils are identified accurately.
- Leaders use the sport premium to good effect, for example for the purchase of additional sporting equipment and professional development for staff. The funding has

ensured that the quality of pupils' physical education (PE) impacts positively on their health and general well-being.

- Parents are mostly supportive of the school. One parent, expressing views typical of many parents, commented: 'My children enjoy coming to school and feel valued as members of the school community. Thatcham Park is a school that offers a rich curriculum and challenges pupils to make progress and achieve their full potential.'

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Since the previous inspection, new governors have joined the governing body and a highly-motivated and skilled new chair of governors has been appointed. Together, they have wasted no time in improving their effectiveness and efficiency. Wisely, they have restructured how they work and the way they monitor leaders' actions. Governors provide thorough scrutiny of the school development plan and hold leaders to account robustly.
- Governors are adept at using a range of information to inform their evaluation of the school's effectiveness. They visit the school frequently, meet with leaders, and provide purposeful support and challenge in equal measure. Governors demonstrate high aspirations for all pupils to achieve well and champion on their behalf with resolve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have developed a culture of vigilance at Thatcham Park. Staff are trained well to identify and report appropriately all safeguarding concerns. Leaders, through their actions, demonstrate that their knowledge of child protection matters and statutory guidance is up to date.
- Leaders work well with other child protection officers. They contribute well to the work of other agencies and organisations that protect children from harm. When necessary, leaders do not shy away from challenging others if they feel that vulnerable pupils are not receiving the care or support to which they are entitled.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, e-safety lessons teach them how to use the internet and social media safely. Other activities help pupils cycle on the road while minimising the risk of accident or injury. Important work has been carried out recently to ensure that pupils thoroughly understand the dangers associated with the nearby railway and level crossings.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Throughout the school, teaching is typically of a good standard.
- Mostly, teachers make good use of assessment information to inform their teaching. They check what pupils know and understand frequently during lessons and adapt teaching to better meet pupils' needs. Lessons are usually planned well and are productive and purposeful as a result.
- The teaching of writing throughout the school is particularly strong. There is a shared, clear emphasis on broadening pupils' vocabulary and ensuring that they make good

word choices in their writing. This is illustrated by a Year 5 pupil who redrafted his work skilfully, adding detail and description. His writing included the following: 'One wonderful day, there lived an ungrateful king called Hector. He loved the finest things in life and would only accept the very best.'

- Mathematics is taught well. Lessons are challenging, requiring most pupils to apply their mathematical knowledge and understanding to a good standard. For instance, in a Year 2 class, the most able pupils were grappling with the different combinations of coins, using them to make change in a shopping activity. The task ensured that they had to think deeply to solve the problems.
- The creative arts are taught particularly well. Inspectors were very impressed with pupils' high-quality artwork that adorn walls and spaces throughout the school. Similarly, pupils' musical abilities are equally impressive. The lead inspector was wowed by the tuneful and impressive performance of the Christmas carol 'Good King Wenceslas' by the school's band.
- The support provided by teaching assistants is good. They play an active role in supporting learning and show initiative and energy when working alongside class teachers. Typically, they ask pupils searching questions, provide clear and precise explanations, and support pupils, including those with SEND, to learn more and develop as independent learners.
- Sometimes, teaching across the wider curriculum is not challenging enough. Occasionally, tasks are not planned sufficiently well, taking full account of pupils' needs, including those of the most able. When this occurs, learning is less engaging and some pupils do not achieve as well as they could.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Leaders are tenacious in providing care for vulnerable pupils and their families. The exemplary service provided by the school's 'family school support workers' ensures that parents in need are signposted to, and receive, a wide range of external support. This team's highly nurturing ethos was summed up when one of the workers commented, 'We look at welfare for the whole family. We can't always solve, but we can support.'
- Pupils have very caring attitudes towards each other. They demonstrate the highest levels of respect and tolerance. In part, this is due to the effective way in which the school promotes its values, together with the frequent opportunities pupils have to reflect upon them. One pupil commented on the strength of the school, saying: 'It's an inclusive learning environment where you do lots of different things in a Christian ethos.'
- Pupils state that bullying rarely happens. On the very rare instances that it does, they say that adults resolve it quickly. Pupils told inspectors that they 'feel safe at school and are always looked after if we are hurt'.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Rates of attendance are high. Pupils rarely miss school and are keen and eager to participate in learning. Through their enthusiasm and grit, pupils effectively demonstrate the importance they place on their education.
- In the vast majority of lessons, pupils strive to do their best. They listen attentively to their teachers and each other, and show great pride in their work. Many pupils' books were presented to the highest standards. As one pupil commented, 'It's good to work hard and behave well.'
- Pupils are keen and proud to represent their school. The number of pupils who participate in clubs and extra-curricular activities is high. A substantial number, for instance, are members of the school's choir and relish the opportunity to perform in public and across the wider community.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, most Year 1 pupils achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check. Leaders are determined that younger pupils will build a broad vocabulary, and know and effectively use letters and the sounds they represent. Current pupils are achieving well and learn to read swiftly and accurately.
- The outcomes for the end of key stage 1, in 2018, show that pupils' attainment in reading and writing were broadly in line with the national averages. However, pupils' attainment in mathematics dipped slightly. Leaders have taken the right action to address this and current pupils are achieving much better.
- The 2018 end of key stage 2 outcomes show that most pupils made good progress in reading and mathematics. The attainment of current pupils in these subjects remains strong.
- Many key stage 2 pupils make exceptionally strong progress in writing. This is reflected in the writing in books of current pupils, as well as in the overall high attainment of Year 6 pupils in the 2018 writing assessments. Pupils' writing is a strength of the school.
- Pupils with SEND typically make good progress from their starting points. This is because learning is adapted well to their needs and suitable additional support is always at hand.
- Pupils achieve highly in creative arts. They demonstrate highly developed skills in a range of artistic techniques, such as using colour in their pictures to striking effect. They build upon these skills as they progress through the school.
- The majority of most-able pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. However, learning is sometimes not planned well enough across the wider curriculum, with the result that some most-able pupils do not make the progress they are capable of in some subjects.
- Some disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, do not achieve well enough across the curriculum. Leaders know that some of these pupils are capable of

achieving at the higher standards. More needs to be done to improve the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in a range of subjects.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years setting is well led. Leaders ensure that accurate assessment information about children's development and skills is used well to shape activities to help them learn. Positive relationships abound throughout the early years setting and children make good progress from their different starting points. Most pupils are ready for the next stage of their education when they start in Year 1.
- The setting is bright, lively and engaging. Leaders plan a good range of interesting activities to cover all areas of learning. Children engage enthusiastically and many show an ability to remain focused for sustained periods. This was illustrated by a group of children working determinedly to write the letters in order to spell their own names. Several achieved this very well and were rightly pleased with what they had done.
- Behaviour is exemplary within the early years. Staff model good behaviour extremely effectively and use a range of highly successful strategies to ensure that children follow instructions appropriately and meet the high standards for conduct. In turn, children learn quickly what is expected of them and rise to adults' high expectations. As a result, the setting is calm and harmonious.
- Parents contribute well to their children's development. For instance, home visits are carried out prior to children starting their first term. These enable staff to know and understand any parental worries or concerns. Similarly, staff consider parents' views when assessing children's emerging knowledge and understanding. Positive relationships between home and school contribute successfully to children's ongoing learning.
- Safeguarding is effective in the early years. All statutory requirements are met and careful consideration is given to all health and safety guidance. Children learn how to keep themselves safe. They listen to adults carefully and following instructions obediently and conscientiously.

School details

Unique reference number	135080
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10053240

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Prof Dr Martin Parsons
Headteacher	Mrs Alison Webster
Telephone number	01635 870950
Website	www.thatchampark.w-berks.sch.uk/
Email address	office@thatchampark.w-berks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 June 2016

Information about this school

- Thatcham Park CofE Primary is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average, as is the proportion who have an education, health and care plan.
- The school funds and provides its own breakfast club for disadvantaged pupils which is overseen by the governing body.
- The school received a monitoring inspection visit in March 2018. Senior leaders and governors were found to be taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning throughout the school, spoke to pupils and looked at work in their books. Observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body and four other governors, a representative from the Diocese of Oxford and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors met with parents to gather their views at the start of the day. In addition, 172 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 44 free-text comments, were considered. The inspectors also took account of 26 responses to the staff questionnaire and 27 responses to the pupil survey.
- A range of documents was reviewed, including: the school’s development plan and self-evaluation document; the school’s single central record of recruitment checks on adults; information about pupils’ achievement, attendance, behaviour and safety; information about the performance management of staff; minutes of the governing body’s meetings; and the local authority’s reports on the school.

Inspection team

Dom Cook, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Kevin Parfoot	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Francis	Ofsted Inspector

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