

Thornhill Junior and Infant School

Edge Lane, Thornhill, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF12 0QT

Inspection dates

1–2 May 2019

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	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching is good. Professional development for teaching staff in subjects such as phonics and writing has ensured that pupils typically make strong progress.
- Leaders have placed reading at the heart of pupils' learning. Consequently, pupils are enthusiastic readers and show a secure understanding of what they have read.
- The curriculum is well designed and, hence, captures pupils' interest and feeds their motivation to learn. As a result, pupils demonstrate positive attitudes in lessons.
- Although teaching is good, in a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, some pupils, often the most able, receive work which is not challenging enough. Therefore, too few pupils reach the higher standards of learning.
- Leaders have successfully reduced pupils' absences to bring attendance rates in line with average. Pupils understand the importance of good attendance and value their education.
- Leadership and teaching in the early years are both effective. Adults enable the children to become confident, independent learners. Consequently, children make strong progress.
- Governors, trustees and the trust are effective in challenging and supporting leaders. They make an important contribution to the strategic leadership of the school.
- Leaders of a number of wider curriculum subjects are not experienced in ensuring effective teaching in their subjects. Additionally, they are not able to demonstrate the difference they make to pupils' outcomes.
- Teaching assistants often support pupils' learning effectively. However, this is not the case in all year groups consistently.
- Although disadvantaged pupils' attainment has often lagged behind that of other pupils nationally, strengthened leadership in this area has secured better progress for current pupils.
- Phonics teaching has improved considerably and most pupils develop their early reading skills well. However, for some pupils, particularly some lower-attaining pupils, teaching is not fully effective and their progress is hampered.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Strong teaching in music and personal, social, health, citizenship and economic (PSHCE) education underpins this effectively. Pupils are polite, respectful and empathetic.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve further the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, make stronger progress by ensuring that:
 - pupils, particularly the most able, receive work in all subjects which challenges them appropriately
 - phonics teaching is consistently effective and the books pupils, particularly lower-attaining pupils, use to practise are matched tightly to their phonics knowledge
 - all teaching assistants make a positive difference to pupils' learning.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - middle leaders are accountable for improving the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes in wider curriculum subjects through thorough and timely monitoring and evaluation.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders have established a warm ethos in the school, based on respect for all. This is underpinned by the wealth of opportunities leaders have put in place which promote effectively pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Senior leaders have secured improvements to crucial aspects of the school's work. They are accurate in their evaluations and identify appropriate priorities. They are skilled in leading improvements. This is illustrated through their strengthening of the quality of teaching, including in phonics and writing, and in the reduction in pupils' absences.
- Leaders have established effective relationships with other schools in the trust. Along with training provided by external specialists and trust improvement partners, this has supported the professional development of staff effectively. As a result, teaching staff are equipped with appropriate subject knowledge and feel valued.
- English and mathematics leaders have developed the quality of teaching in these subjects consistently. They have introduced new approaches to the teaching of phonics, reading, writing and mathematics, and have focused on pupils' language development. Through providing professional development for teaching staff and carrying out thorough checks on the quality of teaching, these leaders have ensured that pupils make strong progress in these areas.
- Leaders have designed the curriculum skilfully to interest pupils and provide them with a balance of the national curriculum subjects. Leaders have prioritised the pupils building a secure knowledge of the world and developing skills in communication and enquiry. These aspects are clearly evident in pupils' learning.
- Leaders spend the pupil premium funding effectively. Over the last two years, the deputy headteacher has become a proud advocate for disadvantaged pupils and has strengthened this aspect of leadership. Leaders have identified disadvantaged pupils' barriers to learning accurately and have matched a range of strategies to pupils' needs precisely. Leaders check on the difference their approach makes to pupils' outcomes. Although disadvantaged pupils' attainment has lagged behind that of other pupils nationally, they are now making strong progress across a range of subjects.
- Leadership for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is effective. The special educational needs coordinator is knowledgeable and provides a valuable source of expertise for teaching staff. She has ensured that pupils with SEND have clear and appropriate targets, which are linked tightly to their needs. Teaching is adapted well and, as a result, pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Parents and carers have frequent opportunities to share in their children's learning. They appreciate regular invitations to attend assemblies, workshops and half termly presentations of pupils' topic work. For example, many parents visited school recently following an enrichment week, where they enjoyed exhibitions of pupils' art work and musical performances which centred on celebrating diversity.
- Leaders of wider curriculum subjects, such as history and art, are knowledgeable and keen to ensure that pupils receive the best possible teaching in their subjects. They

have been supported by senior leaders to check on the quality of teaching. However, many are new to their roles. As such, they have not used the information gathered during monitoring to improve teaching or pupils' outcomes.

- Leaders have ensured that the primary physical education and sports funding is spent appropriately. Specialist coaches deliver lessons for pupils and provide professional development for staff. Pupils benefit from participating in a range of sports clubs and competitions. Leaders have ensured that pupils of all abilities, including pupils with SEND, participate in such events. However, leaders have not checked thoroughly on the difference some of their actions have made to pupils.

Governance of the school

- The effectiveness of governance has recently been strengthened through the strategic recruitment of new governing body members who have a range of relevant expertise.
- Governors, trustees and the trust receive detailed information from senior leaders in relation to the quality of teaching, pupils' outcomes and attendance. Consequently, they have a clear understanding of the priorities for improvement and the difference senior leaders are making to these aspects.
- Governors, trustees and the trust are skilled in challenging senior leaders and they use external reports to hold leaders to account effectively.
- The trust places high value on the professional development of staff at all levels. They ensure that staff have opportunities to share good practice with other trust schools, for example in the areas of music, PSHCE education and site management. Similarly, where the school has priorities, other trust schools support leaders with remedying these.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have established a culture of safeguarding in the school. Members of staff are clear about their responsibilities in keeping children safe.
- Staff with designated responsibility for safeguarding have a firm understanding of families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They make timely referrals to external agencies, where necessary, and maintain detailed records in relation to child protection concerns.
- Leaders are knowledgeable about events locally and nationally and understand how issues could impact on pupils. They plan the curriculum appropriately to ensure that pupils know how to stay safe in a variety of contexts, including online.
- Pupils who shared their views during the inspection said that they feel safe in the school. They trust members of staff to support them with any worries which may arise.
- Appropriate checks are in place to ensure that members of staff are suitable to work with children. Records in respect of this are organised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers ensure that pupils' learning is purposeful by making well considered links between a range of subjects within a topic. Pupils often decide which aspects of a topic they would like to explore. This stimulates pupils' curiosity effectively. They regularly reflect on what they have learned and think about their next steps. Pupils are enthused by this approach and, hence, show positive attitudes to learning and take pride in their work.
- The teaching of writing has improved considerably. Teachers now sequence learning systematically so that pupils build up their skills and then apply them in extended pieces of writing. Pupils are motivated to write because they do so in relation to their topics. As a result, pupils' writing shows strong progress.
- In mathematics, pupils develop a secure understanding of numbers and are confident in calculating. They frequently apply their mathematics skills to real-life contexts, including those related to their topics. Through this, pupils are able to problem-solve and use mathematical reasoning. However, the activities teachers plan for the most able pupils sometimes lack complexity. Therefore, this group do not consistently reach their full potential in this subject.
- Leaders' focus on developing pupils' love of reading has brought much success. High-quality texts now underpin pupils' learning in all subjects. Pupils are keen readers and show a clear understanding of the books and texts they have read. As such, they are able to infer meaning, comment on an author's choice of words and make predictions. However, in some year groups, the most able pupils are not challenged to think deeply enough about their reading.
- Following professional development for teaching staff, phonics teaching is effective for most pupils. Almost all teaching staff demonstrate strong subject knowledge and this ensures that most pupils have reliable strategies for reading unfamiliar words. However, teaching is not always effective due to some inaccurate adult demonstration. Additionally, the books which pupils use to practise their early reading skills are not precisely matched to their phonics knowledge. This hampers the progress some pupils make, particularly the lower-attaining pupils.
- Previous shortcomings in the quality of teaching in phonics have meant that pupils have moved to Year 2 and beyond without the phonics skills they need. Effective additional teaching is now in place for these pupils, which is helping them to catch up.
- Pupils acquire knowledge and skills well in wider curriculum subjects, such as geography and religious education (RE). Their learning is supported and their interest sparked through a range of practical experiences and educational visits, for example to places of worship. However, as in reading and mathematics lessons, the work given to the most able pupils in wider curriculum subjects, including science, is sometimes too easy. This means that they are not always able to excel as they should.
- Teachers place considerable focus on pupils' language development, particularly expanding pupils' vocabulary. Pupils have regular opportunities to discuss their learning and are articulate in doing so. They acquire new words, including technical vocabulary, well, particularly in relation to their topics.
- The teaching of music is particularly strong. Pupils show high levels of engagement in

lessons taught by a specialist teacher and they learn a different instrument each year. Pupils and parents appreciate the rich musical opportunities which form a part of the everyday routine at the school.

- Teaching assistants typically support pupils' learning effectively. Many provide additional teaching for groups of pupils who have not fully grasped the content of a lesson. This often ensures that pupils do not fall behind. However, in a small number of year groups, teaching assistants are not well deployed or they demonstrate a lack of skill in moving pupils' learning on.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Leaders' work to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- The well-developed music curriculum plays a crucial part in supporting pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Pupils benefit from a range of musical experiences, such as an opera visit during Year 4, opportunities to perform in the school band and to compete in musical contests with pupils from other schools. Pupils also learn about other cultures through a focus on different musical genres, significant artists and musicians.
- Pupils' moral, social and emotional development is prioritised across the curriculum, particularly through reading. Teachers are adept in choosing texts which raise pertinent issues, such as homelessness. Pupils' understanding of others, including of diversity, is also developed effectively through PSHCE education and a well-planned assembly programme. Additionally, leaders' work to promote British values has ensured that pupils are tolerant and are well prepared for life in modern Britain. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour and derogatory language are rare.
- Pupils take on a range of leadership roles, including librarian, play leader and assembly helper. As a result, they are sensible and mature. Leaders have developed a school 'passport', which outlines all of the experiences pupils will encounter during their time at the school. This includes a wealth of educational experiences, including a residential trip, visits, workshops, outdoor learning and expert visitors. These are linked coherently to topics to enhance pupils' learning across the curriculum.
- Pupils understand what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. A considerable number attend the school's breakfast club, which provides a positive start to the day. Pupils also benefit from participating in a range of extra-curricular clubs, including sports, art, music and science.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils rise to adults' high expectations of them and, hence, they conduct themselves well. They are polite, welcoming and respectful. This creates a calm atmosphere in the school.

- Leaders have recently revised the policy on behaviour and, working with the school council, have introduced a reward scheme where each pupil belongs to a 'house' team. This has been effective in reducing behavioural incidents and in increasing pupils' sense of responsibility to their team.
- Leaders have successfully reduced pupils' absences and have brought their attendance rates in line with average. Leaders have achieved this through a number of strategies, including ensuring a thorough system for following up absences and pupils' falling attendance rates. They have also worked with the school council to introduce incentives for good attendance, such as an invitation to film club. Additionally, pupils now learn about the importance of good attendance. As a result, pupils value their education and understand the part it plays in shaping their futures. This was reflected by one pupil who said, 'I don't want to miss anything!'

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The improvements leaders have secured to the quality of teaching have ensured that current pupils make good progress across a range of subjects, including in English and mathematics. However, in some year groups, the lack of challenge for the most able pupils means that the proportion of pupils reaching the higher standards of learning is sometimes too low.
- Pupils' acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding in wider curriculum subjects, such as history, geography and RE, is good. In music, the high-quality teaching and the well-designed curriculum ensure that pupils' outcomes are strong. In some subjects, such as science, the lack of challenge for the most able pupils means that their progress is not maximised.
- Published data shows that, since the school opened, pupils reaching the end of key stage 2 have made average progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although improvements in pupils' attainment were evident in 2018 in reading and mathematics, their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics combined remained below average.
- In 2018 in key stage 1, pupils' attainment in reading and mathematics was close to the national average. However, their attainment in writing was significantly below average, with just over half of the pupils reaching the standards expected for their age.
- In contrast to the published outcomes, pupils in all year groups now make strong progress in writing. The improvements leaders have secured to the quality of teaching mean that more pupils are now reaching the standards expected for their age.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress. The majority of pupils in this group have needs relating to communication or cognition. For these pupils, working towards specific targets with the support of tailored teaching ensures that they make strong progress from their starting points.
- Similar to other pupils in school, disadvantaged pupils' low starting points have meant that, by the end of key stage 1 and 2, their attainment has lagged behind that of other pupils nationally. Strengthened leadership in this area has ensured that current pupils progress well. Additional teaching in response to ongoing assessments is often effective in preventing pupils from falling behind and in helping them to catch up.

- Due to the shortcomings in phonics teaching which previously existed, the proportion of pupils who have reached the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below average for the last two years. With teaching now improving, most pupils acquire phonics knowledge well. However, teaching is not fully effective and this hinders some pupils' progress, particularly that of lower-attaining pupils.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have ensured that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in the early years is good. Consequently, children are confident learners and they make strong progress.
- The early years leader is adept in identifying and improving priority aspects. She supports the professional development of colleagues effectively and encourages adults to be reflective about their practice.
- Leaders have formed effective links with pre-school providers and this has aided children's transition to the school significantly. Adults are able to build a clear picture of children's interests and stages of development prior to them joining the Reception class. As a result, staff are able to meet children's needs accurately right from the start of the year.
- This academic year, children have entered the Reception class with knowledge and skills typical for their age. Leaders have ensured that professional discussion between adults leads to accurate assessments of the children. Teachers then use these assessments consistently to plan adult-led activities which represent an appropriate level of challenge.
- The teaching of phonics is effective in the early years. Children develop early reading skills confidently and demonstrate an enthusiasm for books. They enjoy participating in a daily vote for which book they would prefer to hear at story time. This also provides children with an early experience of democracy and fairness.
- Adults are skilled in designing activities which children find enticing. Tasks which are on offer for children to lead their own learning are often linked to a theme which fosters children's interest. For example, during the inspection, children were motivated by their farm topic and found activities linked to this engaging. As a result, children are keen to learn and are able to sustain their concentration for extended periods.
- Adults are also effective in creating learning opportunities which promote children's language development effectively. For example, during the inspection, a farm small-world activity and a hotel role play area were both highly effective in stimulating talk between children. Children choosing these activities consolidated and extended their vocabulary and speaking skills while enjoying playing with their friends.
- Although the activities on offer for children to lead their own learning are suitable for most pupils, these are not fully effective for the most able children. For example, there are a wide range of opportunities for children to develop their fine motor skills. However, there are limited opportunities for children who are ready to write at length to practise independently.
- Parents and staff have regular opportunities to share information about children's learning. Parents also appreciate the weekly invitation to 'stay and play'. These

strategies ensure effective communication between the school and home.

- Adults have high expectations of children's behaviour. They also promote children's social and personal development well. As a result, children conduct themselves well and cooperate effectively with each other.
- Relationships between adults and children are very positive and all welfare requirements are met. Adults create a nurturing environment where children are encouraged to be independent. Consequently, the children flourish in both their academic and personal development.

School details

Unique reference number	143231
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10087620

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	365
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Paul Spencer
Headteacher	Michael Rowland
Telephone number	01924 485638
Website	http://www.thornhilljschool.co.uk
Email address	thornhill@focus-trust.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Thornhill Junior and Infant School is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. It opened in September 2016 when it joined the Focus Trust. Children start at the school in the Reception class.
- The predecessor school was inspected in March 2015 and its overall effectiveness was judged to be good.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage and 11 different ethnic groups are represented. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average but the proportion with an education, health and care (EHC) plan is average.
- The school runs a breakfast club, after-school club and holiday club for pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of subjects in classes across all year groups. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with leaders.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work and listened to them read. They observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school, including at playtimes and lunchtimes. They gathered pupils' views about the school through formal and informal discussions. They also considered the 30 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders, the chair of the governing body and a parent governor. They also met with the chief executive officer of the trust, a trustee advocate and two academy improvement partners. They spoke to staff both formally and informally, and took account of the 37 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, minutes of governing body meetings and EHC plans. Inspectors reviewed safeguarding documents and monitoring records of the quality of teaching and learning. Inspectors also evaluated information relating to pupils' outcomes, behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors gathered the opinions of parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of the views of 29 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the 14 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Karine Hendley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alison Ashworth	Ofsted Inspector
Zoe Westley	Ofsted Inspector

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