

# Thorn Grove Primary School

Thorn Grove, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5LD

## Inspection dates

9 to 10 May 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The school has improved significantly since the last inspection. Staff and governors have worked together effectively to ensure that pupils are well taught, make good progress and are well cared for.
- The headteacher leads the school with clear vision and determination. He is ambitious for all the pupils to achieve well and to develop a 'love of learning'. His work is praised by staff, pupils and most parents.
- Leaders have a good understanding of how well the school is performing. Their improvement plans pinpoint what needs to be done to raise achievement and these are carefully monitored by governors.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection. It is currently strongest at key stage 2, where teachers' subject knowledge is good.
- There are some inconsistencies in the teaching at key stage 1. Over time, standards at the end of key stage 1 have not risen as strongly as at key stage 2.
- The early years provision gives an effective start to children's school lives. Routines are established early and relationships with adults are strong. Children are engaged, happy and safe in the setting.
- Attendance is in line with national averages and persistent absence has declined in the last year. Pupils arrive at school on time and ready to learn.
- Senior leaders and staff have been successful in improving behaviour across the school. In the majority of lessons, pupils are attentive and eager to answer questions and get on with their work.
- Disadvantaged pupils receive effective support which is carefully adapted to their needs. They are currently making progress broadly in line with other pupils nationally.
- Governors have the necessary skills to provide a good level of both challenge and support. Their involvement in the school has contributed to the improvement in standards achieved.
- Leaders have ensured that the curriculum provides opportunities for learning in a range of subjects. It motivates and interests pupils and develops positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders do not always make sure that parents receive timely enough information about their children's progress, or that concerns are responded to quickly enough.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at key stage 1 so that pupils make consistently good progress in all classes and standards improve over time.
- Improve the quality of communication with parents so that they are kept regularly informed about their children's progress and any concerns are responded to quickly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Senior leaders work effectively as a team. They share the headteacher's vision for the school. Teachers also understand the school's aims and priorities for improvement. Both teachers and pupils have risen to the challenge of leaders' high expectations. As a result, the quality of education has improved since the last inspection.
- The headteacher and other leaders have very effective systems for checking pupils' progress. They hold regular discussions with teachers about how well pupils are doing. They make sure that any who are at risk of falling behind are well supported by adapting their work or by adding extra support. This means that pupils are quickly helped to catch up.
- Leaders ensure that teachers have opportunities for professional development and to share with one another what works well. Teachers and those new to leadership roles are positive about how access to training helps them to develop their practice and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- There has been a sharp focus on improving pupils' outcomes since the last inspection. For example, leaders have raised the profile of reading in the school and made sure that pupils' writing skills are built up over a sequence of lessons. The teaching of writing is consistent across all classes and teachers routinely use correct grammatical terms to help pupils improve their sentences. As a result, pupils enjoy reading and writing, and this is having a positive impact on achievement.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) leads the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. She ensures that pupils' barriers to learning are identified accurately and she monitors pupils' progress and attendance to evaluate the effectiveness of the support they are given.
- A few parents told inspectors that their children with SEND do not receive appropriate support and that concerns are not addressed swiftly enough. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that most pupils with SEND benefit from the help provided and make good progress from their starting points. Leaders understand the need to respond to parental concerns more swiftly.
- Middle leaders are knowledgeable about their areas of responsibility, and they contribute to school improvement planning. They are involved in checking how well pupils are performing in their areas of responsibility, and they provide appropriately targeted training and guidance for teachers. Consequently, middle leaders accurately identify the key areas for development and are effective in driving improvement.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils have access to a broad curriculum. Although leaders have plans to reshape the curriculum in the future, pupils are currently interested and motivated by the subjects on offer. Pupils in Year 4 spoke enthusiastically about their work on solids, liquids and gases in science and showed good gains in their scientific knowledge. Pupils appreciate the range of trips, visitors and residential visits that the school offers.
- Pupils' experience at school is enhanced by the range of extra-curricular activities that leaders provide. There are many sporting clubs and enrichment activities, which are

popular with pupils.

- Leaders ensure that all pupils have an equal opportunity to learn and develop well whatever their background or ability. Leaders make good use of pupil premium funding. This secures good progress for disadvantaged pupils from their individual starting points and means that they are fully included in all aspects of school life.
- Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. School assemblies give them opportunities to reflect on their own feelings and experiences and to consider their rights and responsibilities in relation to others. Pupils have a good awareness of values such as tolerance and a respect for differences.
- Leaders are very effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils undertake regular visits to places of cultural and spiritual importance. Year 3 pupils in particular enjoyed learning about a Hindu wedding, for example. Pupils actively participate in a range of charity activities. For example, they speak proudly of their work with the local foodbank. Fundamental British values, such as democracy and the rule of law, are embedded in the culture of the school.
- Leaders make effective use of the physical education (PE) and sport premium additional funding. Both pupils and staff are rightly proud of the daily mile running track, which has been installed recently.

### **Governance of the school**

- Strong governance contributes towards the school's effectiveness. Individual governors oversee an aspect of the work of the school. Governors supplement the information leaders give them about standards by visiting the school themselves. They complete reports on their findings and agree priorities for improvement.
- Governors have attended a good range of training opportunities, including for those new to the role. This means, for example, that they can effectively interpret school performance data.
- Governors are regularly involved in whole-school improvement planning. They contribute to the school's development plan and its self-evaluation document. This gives them a good understanding of what the school does well, and what it needs to do to improve. Governors are aware of the need to raise standards further at key stage 1, and they have created a working party to improve the quality of communication with parents.
- Governors regularly review the impact of the pupil premium funding to make sure that it is being spent to best effect. They also ensure that all school policies are regularly reviewed and updated, including the school's safeguarding policy.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Leaders have ensured that a high proportion of staff are trained to be able to lead on child protection and that they implement the policy consistently. Staff at all levels receive regular safeguarding training, and they know how to identify pupils who are potentially at risk. Staff

understand, and follow, leaders' clear procedures for reporting any safeguarding concerns.

- All required checks are carried out when recruiting new staff to work with pupils.
- School leaders ensure that safeguarding concerns are logged effectively. Leaders are tenacious in making sure that child protection referrals are dealt with appropriately. Leaders work well with a range of external agencies to make sure that pupils get the support they need quickly.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

**Good**

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the previous inspection. Leaders' expectations of teachers are clear. Leaders' chosen strategies and approaches to teaching are having a positive impact on teachers' practice and, in turn, on pupils' learning. This is evident in the strong and improved progress that most current pupils are making.
- Teaching is most effective at key stage 2. At key stage 1, where classroom routines are less well established and reinforced, opportunities for pupils to gain new knowledge are sometimes missed.
- Classroom environments are conducive to learning. They are supportive, and pupils make use of displays to help them improve their work. Teachers encourage pupils to use as many available resources around them to check their work. Pupils use prompts and checklists, particularly when writing, to help remember the features of different text types. As a result, time in lessons is maximised and pupils are increasingly able to work on their own without extra help.
- Teachers encourage pupils to discuss with a partner first when they get stuck. This has enabled the most vulnerable pupils to feel safe and happy to contribute positively in lessons.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very strong. Pupils respect their teachers and have positive attitudes to learning. As a result, pupils are keen to get involved in activities and they are not afraid to take risks and make mistakes.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. They question individual pupils, and groups of pupils, skilfully to gain an understanding of what pupils already know. They use this information to provide pupils with specific and appropriate guidance about what they need to do to improve their work further. A good example was seen in a Year 5 PE lesson when pupils were helped to develop tactics to become a better runner.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils with SEND. They plan closely with teachers and they understand the needs of pupils who they are working with. Their effective questioning and explanation of tasks support pupils with SEND to make good progress.
- Teaching in science and the foundation subjects allows pupils to develop a wide range of new knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils enjoy the activities that their teachers devise for them and learn new facts and methods for carrying out experiments. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed comparing the weight of a ball when it was inflated and deflated.

- The teaching of mathematics is consistent across the school. Leaders have focused on adding extra challenge for the most able pupils so that they gain deeper mathematical understanding.
- There is rightly an emphasis in all classes on using key vocabulary as part of teaching different topics. Teachers spend time ensuring that pupils understand complex words and can use them in other contexts. Pupils spoken to in Year 4 could recall the technical grammatical vocabulary they had learned to describe how they improved their writing.
- At key stage 1, the teaching of phonics takes place routinely and there is a consistent approach. Pupils are grouped so that they can learn new letters and sounds at a pace that suits them. Where teaching is less effective at meeting pupils' needs at key stage 1, progress in acquiring phonics knowledge is not consistently good over time.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils spoken to as part of the inspection said that they feel safe at school. This view is shared by most of the parents who responded to Parent View and spoke to inspectors.
- The school teaches pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet.
- The school has clear processes in place to deal with any incidents of bullying. Almost all pupils say that when bullying occurs, teachers deal with it well and resolve problems. When bullying does recur, leaders apply the school's sanctions appropriately, but also seek support to address the bullying behaviour of the pupils concerned.
- The school places a high priority on promoting healthy lifestyles through, for example, providing fresh fruit.
- Pupils have opportunities to hold positions of responsibility through being elected as members of the school council. This also supports pupils' understanding of the democratic process and enables them to make a positive contribution to the school community. The school council has made decisions about how to spend money raised by the school and which charities to support.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are typically polite and respectful to one another and to adults. They generally behave well in lessons and in less structured parts of the day, such as playtime and lunchtime.
- The very large majority of pupils understand and respond well to the school's behaviour and reward system. There are examples of where support provided by the school has resulted in significant improvements in behaviour for individual pupils. This has resulted in a reduction in the number of pupils who are excluded temporarily.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Systems to monitor and follow up absences have been tightened. This has had a positive impact on improving

attendance since the last inspection, both overall and for some pupils with previously high rates of absence.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Achievement for pupils across the school has increased since the previous inspection, particularly at key stage 2. The percentage of pupils achieving the expected standard at the end of key stage 2 rose in 2018 to above the national average. The proportion of pupils who reached the higher standard also improved and is broadly in line with national averages.
- Progress between key stage 1 and key stage 2 is strongest in reading, where all groups of pupils, including those disadvantaged and those with SEND, made better progress than pupils nationally. In writing and in mathematics, pupils' work this year and the school's current assessment information indicate that progress in these subjects at key stage 2 is good, especially for the most able pupils and those who are disadvantaged.
- The proportions of pupils attaining the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 have been in line with national averages over time but dipped in 2018. However, more pupils than the national average reached the higher standard in mathematics and writing. Over time, standards at key stage 1 have not risen as sharply as at key stage 2, which reflects some of the inconsistencies seen in teaching.
- The percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check is in line with the national average.
- Work in other subjects, such as history, music and science, demonstrates good outcomes over time. Pupils' books and work on display show a range of skills as well as pupils' deeper knowledge about topics they have covered. Pupils' art, design and technology work is showcased throughout the school and is of a good standard.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Leadership of the early years is effective because adults work well together as a team. They identify the needs of individual children and different groups carefully. This means that they can ensure that children develop their knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of learning. Consequently, children make good progress and make a positive start to their schooling.
- Leaders ensure that there is good communication with parents so that they can find out what interests children before they start school. As a result, the resources available and the focus of the curriculum engage and inspire children from the time that they start school. Children then have a say in the special topics that they will learn about. At the time of the inspection, children were learning about robots. This inspired all children to write about robots and to make models with names and a character all of their own.
- Teachers routinely assess children's learning accurately, during activities and over time. Adults use questioning well to support and assess children's understanding. Parents are positive about the online system used to share information about children's learning,

which enables them to contribute and to share successes.

- Over time, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development is broadly average. Although children start school with skills typical for their age, the work that they are doing and the assessments made by teachers suggest that they are currently making good progress.
- Adults act as positive role models. Children quickly learn about and meet expectations of behaviour and relationships. Children's personal, social and emotional development is catered for particularly well in the caring and nurturing environment in each class.
- Leaders ensure that children are kept safe. Adults have had safeguarding training and appropriate arrangements are in place for the identification and care of children who have additional needs.



## School details

Unique reference number	117277
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10088657

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Gater-Newhouse
Headteacher	Peter Luck
Telephone number	01279 653 002
Website	<a href="http://www.thorngrove.herts.sch.uk">www.thorngrove.herts.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:head@thorngrove.herts.sch.uk">head@thorngrove.herts.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	23 to 24 March 2017

## Information about this school

- Thorn Grove is an average-sized primary school in the market town of Bishop's Stortford.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- No pupils at the school attend any alternative provision.
- The school has established an informal partnership with 15 other local schools.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to classes and observed learning across all year groups. Many of these visits were carried out with school leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work in a range of subjects, listened to groups of pupils read and reviewed the school's assessment information.
- The inspection team reviewed a range of school documents and policies, including behaviour and attendance information, records of visits carried out by the local authority, minutes of the local governing body meetings and documentation relating to the safeguarding of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils in lessons, met with groups of pupils with their work books and spent time talking to pupils at breaktime and over lunch.
- The lead inspector met with members of the local governing body, senior leaders and a representative of the local authority. A member of the inspection team also held meetings with middle leaders and the special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day and considered 100 responses submitted to Parent View, as well as 64 responses to the free-text option and 26 responses to the survey of staff.

## Inspection team

Mary Jane Edwards, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sally Nutman

Ofsted Inspector

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