

# Thorndon Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

The Street, Thorndon, Eye, Suffolk IP23 7JR

## Inspection dates

19 to 20 June 2019

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement in key stage 2 has declined since the previous inspection. The progress of current pupils is improving but it is not yet consistent.
- New senior leaders have secured vital improvements in the quality of teaching. However, some teachers do not use assessment well to meet the needs of pupils, especially those who are most able.
- Pupils have a limited understanding of different cultures represented in modern Britain.
- In reading, teachers do not check that pupils read widely and develop a love of reading.
- Some teachers do not ensure that pupils use reasoning skills effectively to make stronger progress in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants are not used consistently well to reinforce and extend pupils' learning during whole-class teaching.
- Some areas of the wider curriculum are not well developed for pupils to learn at sufficient depth, such as in history and geography.
- Parents' views of the school are mixed. Some do not understand why recent changes have been made and how these benefit the pupils.

### The school has the following strengths

- The appointment of the new executive headteacher has brought a clear focus for improvement. Well-designed plans are having a positive impact on the quality of teaching.
- New governors are ensuring that leaders are held to account for improving the school.
- Additional funding is used well to support the progress of disadvantaged pupils.
- Early years is well led. The well-planned provision ensures that children get off to a flying start in their education.
- Pupils behave well. Staff are vigilant for pupils' well-being and safety.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that it is consistently good and improves pupils' outcomes by:
  - ensuring that teachers make accurate use of assessment so that learning activities precisely match pupils' abilities, especially for the most able pupils
  - teachers having strong subject knowledge so that pupils make consistent progress across the curriculum
  - strengthening the quality of questioning used by teachers to probe and challenge pupils in their learning
  - using effective methods to check that pupils are reading widely and often
  - teachers understanding how to use the new strategies in mathematics to promote pupils' deeper understanding through the development of reasoning skills
  - teaching assistants contributing consistently well to pupils' learning.
- Strengthen the quality of leadership and management by:
  - building on the actions already introduced by leaders to secure consistently good teaching
  - ensuring that the leadership of the wider curriculum is well established, and pupils make consistent progress across subjects other than English and mathematics
  - pupils developing a deeper understanding of life in modern Britain through a stronger promotion of their cultural development
  - improving communication with parents and carers to ensure that they better understand how changes are made to support the improvement of the school.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- Following the previous inspection, weaknesses in the school's performance were not addressed effectively. This led to a decline in standards and progress at the end of key stage 2.
- New senior leaders have taken effective action. However, some of the initiatives they have introduced are not embedded in teachers' practice. Therefore, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment remains variable.
- From the moment of her arrival, the new executive headteacher has worked tirelessly to improve teaching. This resulted in a period of staff turbulence. Weak teaching was tackled effectively, and the quality of teaching is now improving.
- Senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders' plans are well-focused on how they are bringing improvements to the school.
- Some checks leaders make on teaching focus on compliance rather than improving its effectiveness. This means that not all teachers understand how to use the school's strategies to improve pupils' progress in English and mathematics.
- The executive headteacher has ensured that the curriculum is broad and balanced. Where leaders have received training, pupils' knowledge and skills are developed well, such as in science. However, the quality of leadership is not consistent across all subjects. Activities planned by teachers do not provide some pupils with opportunities to study subjects in sufficient depth, such as history and geography.
- In the past, leaders had not ensured that the use of the pupil premium funding was making a good contribution to the progress of disadvantaged pupils. New leaders are now using this additional funding effectively. Well-targeted actions provide pupils with a range of experiences and support. Current disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress, which is helping to diminish differences in their achievement with other pupils.
- The executive headteacher has taken on the role of the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo). She is supported by an experienced SENCo who works across the informal partnership with a local school. Some parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are concerned about how pupils' needs are met. Leaders have recently ensured that pupils with SEND have clear plans which are reviewed regularly with teachers. A range of interventions are used to support the additional needs of pupils. Teaching assistants have received training and are monitored by leaders to check that these programmes are being delivered successfully. Some interventions are quite recent, and it is still too early to evaluate their impact.
- There is a positive team approach in the school. Leaders are making effective use of training to support the professional development of staff. Often support is provided through the school's partnership links. This is helping to provide the school with expertise while teachers continue to develop and improve their practice.

- Pupils' spiritual, moral and social understanding of different faiths is promoted well. Through the use of the school's values and issues discussed in assemblies, pupils have a healthy respect of one another and work together productively. However, pupils have a limited awareness and experience of the different cultures represented in modern Britain.
- A significant minority of parents have concerns about the school. Relationships with some parents are not positive. Parents do not understand the reasons for the changes leaders have made.
- Leaders are making effective use of the sport premium to provide pupils with opportunities to participate in sporting activities, especially where the school lacks facilities such as a school hall. Pupils have increased opportunities to represent the school in different sports and develop a better understanding of their health and fitness. For example, pupils have been introduced to yoga-style sessions to help support their well-being.

### **Governance of the school**

- The recent introduction of new governors has provided governance with a fresh vision and focus. Governors are committed to bring about the improvements that are required for the school. They share the high expectations and ambition of senior leaders for the achievement of pupils.
- Governors have a good understanding of the school's priorities. They undertake a range of monitoring activities that link to the school's improvement plan. In this way, they gather the information they require to hold school leaders to account.
- Governors keep a careful check on how leaders use the additional funding. They challenge leaders on how this funding is making a difference for the pupils to ensure that it is well spent.
- Governors regularly visit the school to check that safeguarding procedures are effective.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have established a secure culture of safeguarding that permeates the school. Staff keep a constant vigilance for the safety and well-being of pupils.
- The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) are well trained. They ensure that staff receive regular and up-to-date training in all aspects of keeping pupils safe. This means that they are alert to any signs that may indicate pupils are at risk of harm.
- Staff make effective use of the school's procedures for recording concerns. DSLs ensure that referrals are made promptly and are tenacious in following these up to ensure that pupils receive the help they need.
- Records are well maintained. Alongside the safeguarding governor, the DSL makes sure that all employment checks are in place and meet statutory requirements.

- Some parents who responded to Ofsted’s online survey expressed concerns about pupils’ safety. Pupils told the inspector that they felt safe at school. Any concerns they had would be discussed with adults. They understood how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Pupils act as e-safety leaders and ensure that their peers know how to keep safe when using the internet.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Despite the efforts of new leaders, the quality of teaching is not consistently strong across the school. Some teachers do not have secure subject knowledge. For example, some adults’ comments in pupils’ books contain errors in spelling and grammar. Pupils do not readily secure some concepts, such as in mathematics, because not all teachers ensure that pupils work accurately.
- Teachers ask pupils a range of questions. Where this is done well, teachers use pupils’ responses to build on what they know and to help them think more deeply about their learning. For example, questions asked by a teacher in an English lesson helped pupils to write sentences that included more complex phrases and vocabulary. Where teaching is less effective, questioning does not probe pupils’ responses to check their understanding.
- Some teachers do not make effective use of assessment to plan next steps in pupils’ learning. Tasks are often too easy and do not enable pupils, particularly the most able, to think hard about their learning.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are positive. The strong relationships contribute effectively to pupils’ good attitudes to learning. Where teachers plan interesting activities, pupils sustain their concentration and are keen to learn.
- Teaching assistants’ contribution to pupils’ learning is variable. Where they have specific tasks, they use their knowledge well to help reinforce and extend pupils’ understanding. However, at times, teachers do not direct teaching assistants for all parts of the lesson. On these occasions, their contribution to supporting pupils’ progress is limited.
- Where teachers make effective use of the new initiatives in reading, pupils’ progress is stronger. Well-chosen texts support pupils’ reading comprehension skills and provide models for their writing. For example, a class teacher made use of Shackleton’s expedition to the Antarctic, to develop pupils’ descriptive and journalistic writing skills.
- Teachers do not monitor pupils’ individual reading books once they start to read independently. Pupils receive little guidance on what they need to do to develop as readers. Consequently, they do not receive encouragement to read widely and to develop a love of reading.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Many pupils know their sounds and use them when they are reading. For some weaker readers, the books they read are not well matched to their knowledge of phonics. This limits the progress they make. Reading diaries are not used systematically. It is unclear as to their purpose and how they provide parents with any useful information about their child’s progress in reading.
- Leaders have taken measures to improve pupils’ learning in mathematics. Teachers are

planning more frequent activities to help pupils develop their problem-solving skills. However, not all pupils make sufficient use of reasoning to secure their understanding.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Good**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are confident and articulate about their learning. They enjoy school and are proud of their achievements. Pupils particularly enjoy being part of a small school community because they make friends quickly and everyone looks out for each other.
- Pupils willingly undertake different responsibilities across the school. They have opportunities to represent their classmates on the school council or work as junior road safety officers. They develop a good understanding of democracy and citizenship because they understand how to use their responsibilities to shape and influence their life while at school.
- Leaders have developed the wider curriculum to provide pupils with enriching experiences. Residential trips and working outdoors in a local woodland contribute well to pupils' self-esteem and resilience.
- Staff are committed to providing an inclusive and nurturing environment. They support all pupils, particularly those who face challenging personal circumstances, very well. As one staff member said to the inspector, 'Children come first here.'
- Pupils are aware of the different forms bullying can take. They say that it can happen here. However, they are confident that if they had a concern, adults would stop it.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are keen to do their best and have positive learning attitudes. They listen respectfully to adults and quickly follow their instructions. Some incidents of low-level disruption occur where tasks are not well-matched to pupils' abilities. Staff work hard to ensure that those pupils who have difficulties with managing their behaviour are well supported.
- Pupils are polite and greet visitors with a cheery smile or a polite 'hello'. Pupils are reminded how to behave through the use of the school's 'rainbow' values. Pupils are encouraged to recognise how the values are reflected through their work and play. Pupils told the inspector that since this approach was introduced, behaviour has improved.
- Pupils' attendance is improving. Leaders act quickly where they identify any individual concerns and work with families to ensure that pupils come to school regularly.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Requires improvement**

- Cohorts at this school are typically small and can vary widely from year to year. Small

schools may see greater fluctuations in their results over time due to the difference one or two pupils can have on the information overall.

- Historically, pupils' rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2 have been well-below average when compared to the national average.
- Evidence from observations of learning and work in pupils' books shows that progress is inconsistent in different subjects and across year groups. In mathematics, progress is weaker when pupils do not develop a secure understanding by using their reasoning skills.
- The proportion of pupils who achieve the expected standard in the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 dipped in 2018. Those pupils who are weaker readers do not make strong progress, because their books are not well matched to their knowledge of sounds.
- In reading, the use of whole-class texts is helping pupils to make positive gains from their starting points. However, the lack of any systematic approaches to checking independent reading is not ensuring that pupils are reading widely.
- Current pupils make stronger progress in writing where teachers use the school's approaches effectively. However, pupils' spelling remains weak where there has been a legacy of poorer teaching. In some classes, current pupils do not apply their writing skills consistently well in a range of subjects. This is limiting their progress.
- The most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make strong gains from their starting points. The tasks they are given do not always demand them to think more deeply about their learning.
- In the past, disadvantaged pupils did not achieve well enough. Leaders are now using the pupil premium effectively. Work in pupils' books and the school's own assessment information show that disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress from their starting points.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- Children start the early years with different levels of development. They settle quickly due to the thoughtfully planned curriculum that meets their needs. As a result, children are well prepared for the start of key stage 1.
- The early years leader is knowledgeable. She understands her role well and provides good leadership for other staff who work in the provision. This ensures that there is a consistent understanding of how planned tasks support children's development.
- Learning activities are interesting and varied. Plans are adapted to meet children's interests. Children are challenged effectively, whether during their own independent play or within adult-led activities. For example, the dentist theme provided opportunities for developing children's knowledge of sugary foods as well as their understanding of how a dental practice works.
- Staff know the children well. They form excellent relationships with them. This makes a good contribution to developing children's personal, social and emotional skills.
- Children demonstrate a good understanding of playing and learning together. They

take turns and share their ideas. Children are confident in talking about their learning and listen attentively to adults. Reception children enthusiastically spoke about their activities, such as making slime or using the foam tray.

- Adults are good role models for children’s language development. Through their questioning, they prompt children to respond in full sentences and to think more deeply about their learning. The teaching of phonics in Reception is strong.
- Leaders ensure that links with parents are effective. Opportunities to experience ‘stay and play’ sessions and the sharing of key moments of learning while at home ensure that there is good communication.
- Children do not make frequent use of the outdoor area for their development. While a range of activities are available, these do not readily entice children to make use of them to support their learning. Leaders are aware of this and are considering further ways to improve this area.
- All statutory requirements for supporting children’s welfare are in place.

## School details

Unique reference number	124745
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10087427

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

Type of school	All-through Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lorraine Wood
Headteacher	Victoria Gascoyne-Cecil (executive headteacher)
Telephone number	01379 678 392
Website	<a href="http://www.thorndon.suffolk.sch.uk">www.thorndon.suffolk.sch.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@thorndon.suffolk.sch.uk">office@thorndon.suffolk.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	30 April to 1 May 2015

## Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The executive headteacher was appointed in September 2017. At the same time, the school entered into an informal partnership with another local school where the executive headteacher fulfils a similar role. Both schools retain separate governing bodies.
- There is one full-time newly qualified teacher.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in 11 lessons or parts of lessons, some jointly with the executive headteacher.
- The inspector listened to pupils read and talked with them about their reading.
- He met with a group of pupils from key stage 2 and spoke with pupils informally in lessons and around the school.
- He met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, who is also the leader of English, the leader of mathematics and the early years leader. The inspector met with the SENCO who shares the responsibility with the executive headteacher. He also spoke with other teachers, including the newly qualified teacher, and other support staff.
- The inspector met with a group of governors, including the chair of governors.
- He met with a representative of the local authority.
- He met with parents at the start of the day and considered 29 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. He also considered 28 free-text responses. There were no responses to the online staff and pupils' surveys.
- The inspector considered a wide range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation summary, the school's current information on pupils' attainment and progress, attendance records, behaviour and bullying logs, external reports on the work of the school, monitoring records of teaching and learning and a range of documents relating to safeguarding. He also scrutinised minutes of meetings of the governing body and their record of visits to the school.

## Inspection team

Steve Mellors, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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