

Inspection of a good school: Thomlinson Junior School

The Goose Market, High Street, Wigton, Cumbria CA7 9PG

Inspection dates:

4–5 December 2019

Outcome

Thomlinson Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Thomlinson Junior School is a happy place where pupils thrive. The school's curriculum is well designed and ambitious. It enables pupils to succeed. Classroom learning is routinely enhanced by interesting and exciting experiences. These range from lunchtime music clubs to residential trips. On trips, pupils have slept in yurts, visited palaces and even acted in the role of a spy learning about survival in the Lake District.

Pupils relish the opportunities to take on roles of responsibility. They work as school councillors, peer supporters and mini-police officers. Working maturely in their roles of responsibility they help each other to get the most out of school. Pupils told me about their caring teachers. They talked about the positive relationships that teachers have with their pupils. Pupils welcome teachers' high expectations of them. They recognise that this helps them to achieve well.

Pupils' behaviour is good. The atmosphere in school is friendly and purposeful. Pupils told me that they feel safe in school. They told me that bad behaviour and bullying is rare. However, when it does happen they are confident that teachers will take swift action to stop it and to help prevent it reoccurring.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Knowledgeable leaders share an enthusiasm to provide pupils with the best education that they can. Governors know the school well and visit frequently to check on how the school is doing. Staff feel valued because leaders carefully consider the purposes of tasks and activities and ensure that staff workload is managed well.

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. It exceeds the expectations of the national curriculum. It develops pupils' knowledge of the world beyond Wigton. Curriculum planning takes account of pupils' existing knowledge and needs. Pupils build on what they already know through well-considered sequences of lessons. This helps pupils to remember what they have been taught.

Leaders know that there is still work to be done to develop how well teachers use

assessment information. This is particularly the case in subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders are taking actions to deal with this, but it is too soon to see their impact.

Leaders understand that reading is the key to all learning. They have designed a curriculum that effectively promotes pupils' reading fluency and confidence. Additional daily phonics sessions help pupils who are weaker readers to improve. Attainment in national assessments in reading is now above average. In lower key stage 2, some adults who work with pupils in lessons other than phonics sometimes do not use the correct pure sounds that letters make. This does not help pupils who are still developing their reading skills to remember and practise their sounds.

Leaders have recently refined their mathematics curriculum to improve its impact on pupils' learning. Pupils told me that mathematics is now taught much better. They say that the new curriculum helps them to understand more about mathematical ideas. Teachers plan learning in a logical way so that it builds on what pupils already know. Teachers use assessment information effectively to check what pupils know and remember. In the 2019 national assessment, pupils' attainment in mathematics improved to be in line with the national average.

In computing, pupils achieve well. This is because knowledgeable teachers deliver a well-designed curriculum. This curriculum steadily develops pupils' knowledge. Topics are frequently revisited to ensure that pupils remember as much as possible. Pupils learn about all aspects of computing including coding. For example, Year 5 pupils learn about conditional loops and changing variables.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) take full advantage of all the curriculum has to offer. They learn alongside their peers and achieve well. The leader responsible for SEND knows her subject. She ensures that teachers design learning activities to meet pupils' needs.

The school curriculum is crammed with opportunities to promote pupils' personal development. Pupils learn about the wider world. Residential visits to cities such as London and York provide rich and exciting experiences for pupils to learn about diversity and history. All pupils take part in many different clubs and sport.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, governors and all staff at Thomlinson Junior School are committed to keeping pupils safe. Vigilant staff have up-to-date knowledge of safeguarding. All appropriate checks are completed to ensure the suitability of staff. Leaders record safeguarding concerns meticulously. They share information with the right people to protect children who may be at risk of harm.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In subjects other than reading, writing and mathematics teachers do not make best use of the information that they gather about what pupils know and remember. As a result, leaders are unable to check that pupils are learning more and remembering more over time. Leaders need to enhance further teachers' effective use of assessment information to identify any gaps in pupils' knowledge in order to ensure pupils' success.
- In lower key stage 2, some adults do not model clear pronunciation of letter sounds in lessons other than phonics. This weakens the clarity of phonics teaching for pupils who are struggling. Leaders must ensure that all staff have the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to model the correct use of standard English and phonics across the curriculum.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged Thomlinson Junior School to be good on 17–18 May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and

pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	112125
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10122113
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Samantha Starmer
Headteacher	Brenda Fyrth
Website	www.thomlinson.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2016

Information about this school

- The school has a specially resourced provision with places for four pupils with severe and multiple learning difficulties. There are currently two pupils accessing this provision.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, I looked in detail at reading, mathematics and computing. This involved discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work, discussions with teachers and discussions with pupils. I also listened to pupils reading.
- I spoke with members of the governing body, the headteacher and senior leaders.
- I reviewed a range of documentation, including that relating to safeguarding and the checks carried out during the appointment of staff.
- I considered the 31 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents. I also considered the 13 responses from staff and the 50 responses from pupils to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

John Nixon, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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