

Inspection of a good school: Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School

Thornton Watlass, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 4AH

Inspection dates:

27 November 2019

Outcome

Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that standards may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and governors have high expectations of every child. They are determined to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. However, sometimes pupils move on to new learning too quickly, particularly in mathematics. Plans to improve the curriculum are at an early stage. Learning is not sequenced well enough for pupils to build on what they know and can do as well as they should.

Pupils feel safe and happy at school. They are well cared for by the staff. Everyone feels they are part of the school family. Pupils are an important part of the local community. They take part in events at the local church such as Harvest and Christmas celebrations. They enjoy serving 'Lent lunch' to people from the local community.

Poor behaviour is rare. Sometimes pupils fall out with each other but adults help to sort this out. Pupils do not always pay full attention in lessons, particularly when they are not interested in the content.

Pupils care about each other and about people who are less fortunate. They help to raise money for good causes by supporting a local, national and international charity every year. The school council is planning how best to raise money to help homeless people.

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

The curriculum is not sequenced coherently enough. This means that pupils do not build on what they know and can do as well as they should. The new headteacher has recognised this and has set a clear direction for the school to improve. Governors and staff share her ambition for all pupils. Plans to improve the curriculum are already underway. Staff appreciate the training they have received this term. This is helping them

to improve the teaching of reading and mathematics.

Pupils are very interested in the lessons teachers plan for them. Teachers make sure the books that pupils read in English link to learning in other subjects. For example, the story of 'Nila and the secret of rain' helped pupils to understand about drought in Africa. However, the curriculum is not sequenced well enough. As a result, what pupils learn over time is not building on what they already know and can do.

Children get off to a good start in mathematics in the early years. They learn about numbers in many different ways. This helps them to have a good understanding before they move on to bigger numbers. This is not consistent in the two classes of older pupils. Teachers often move them on to new learning too soon. As a result, pupils don't have the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of some concepts.

Pupils enjoy the books that teachers read to them every day. They have many favourite authors. Pupils were particularly excited about the launch of a new David Walliams book. In the early years, adults read favourite books to children many times. This helps them to learn the repeated refrains and stories very well.

Children start learning the sounds they need to know for reading at the start of Reception class. They continue a brisk pace of learning when they move into Year 1. However, some pupils need more time to fill gaps in their knowledge of sounds. The time that these pupils spend in phonics lessons is not used well. This is because they are not ready for the sounds they are being taught. Pupils' reading books do not always match the sounds they already know. As a result, reading books are often too hard for pupils to practise with to help them become fluent readers.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are fully included in lessons. This helps them to do well. Some pupils do not catch up as quickly as they could. This is because the help teachers give them is not planned well enough to fill gaps in their learning.

Teachers plan a wide range of activities to enrich the school curriculum. For example, pupils had enjoyed hot chocolate and tortillas to round off their learning about the Mayans. Pupils have many opportunities to experience the wider world. They are able to take part in residential visits to London and the Lake District. Pupils learn important skills in their outdoor learning sessions. These include learning how to use tools safely and understanding how to keep safe near the river.

Pupils understand the difference between bullying and falling out. They say that when they do fall out, adults help them to sort things out. Pupils help each other with their work and they enjoy playing together. Sometimes pupils ask adults for help before trying themselves. Leaders have plans to help pupils become more resilient and independent in their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders make sure that staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. Staff are vigilant and know each pupil very well. This means that they quickly spot if anything is wrong. They know what action to take if they have any concerns. When necessary, the school works with external agencies to provide help and support for pupils and their families. Staff are very aware of the safeguarding issues that may impact on pupils who live in rural areas. They know that 'things can happen here'. They make sure that pupils learn how to stay safe online and in the wider world.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's approach to the teaching of phonics is slowly becoming stronger. Reading books match the phonics knowledge of some pupils but not all of them. As a result, the pupils who need to catch up get stuck on too many difficult words. Leaders need to make sure that books for all pupils who are learning to decode match the phonemes they already know more closely so they that can practise and become more confident and fluent.
- Pupils who need to catch up in phonics are taught with pupils who are well ahead of them. This means that activities are too hard for them and the time they spend in the phonics lesson can be wasted. Leaders must ensure that the teaching of phonics is precisely focused on what pupils need to do next, rather than relying on interventions to close gaps in learning.
- Children in Reception class have got off to a good start in mathematics because the new headteacher has introduced a new approach to the teaching of early number skills. Leaders must now make sure that curriculum plans for mathematics allow pupils in key stage 1 and key stage 2 to consolidate secure mathematical understanding and fluency by applying their developing skills to a range of problem-solving and reasoning tasks before moving on to new learning. Teachers must ensure that work, including the use of carefully crafted questions, is carefully matched to the mathematical development of their pupils.
- Leaders have started work to design a curriculum that is coherently planned and sequenced in all subjects and that meets the needs of pupils in this rural community. At the moment teachers are choosing topics that interest pupils but are not considering how this curriculum content fits into the overall picture of building knowledge and skills over time. Leaders must now make sure that work on the curriculum is completed so that the new plans help teachers to sequence learning more effectively.

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 Thornton Watlass Church of England Primary 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	121521
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10110854
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	31
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Mrs Joanna Swiers
Headteacher	Mrs Jane Wood
Website	www.stwschoolsfederation.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2016

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above average.
- The school is federated with Snape Community Primary School, with an executive headteacher. The early years class is taught on the Snape site. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are taught on the Thornton Watlass site. Both schools share the same governing body.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant staffing changes, including the appointment of a new interim executive headteacher, and changes in the senior leadership team and in teachers. Membership of the governing body has also changed.
- The school works with other schools within the Swaledale Alliance and the Bedale Cluster, and receives support from the local education authority.

Information about this inspection

- We did deep dives in: reading, mathematics, history and geography. This involved talking to subject leaders, visiting lessons, looking at children's work, hearing children read and talking to children and teachers.
- We met with the headteacher, the lead teacher, the special educational needs coordinator and the subject leader for history and geography.
- We checked the single central record and had discussions with those responsible for leading safeguarding, attendance and pastoral care.
- An inspector met with the chair and the vice-chair of governors.
- An inspector talked to a representative of the local authority and a representative of the Diocese of Leeds.
- We talked to parents, children and staff. The responses to online questionnaires were also considered.
- We observed the behaviour of pupils in lessons, in the dining room and around the school.
- We scrutinised a wide range of documents, including the school's own evaluation and development plans and external reports.

Inspection team

Janet Keefe, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Sharon Stelling

Ofsted Inspector

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