

Inspection of West Thornton Primary Academy

Rosecourt Road, Croydon, Surrey CR0 3BS

Inspection dates: 4–5 February 2020

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils do not learn enough at this school. Leaders have not made sure pupils have lessons which help them build up their knowledge and deepen their understanding. Therefore pupils, including those who attract the pupil premium, are not well enough prepared for the next part of their education.

Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not having their needs met well enough. Leaders and teachers do not know how to use teaching materials and adapt lessons to help these pupils achieve well.

The pupils we spoke with had a very limited understanding of how to stay healthy and of British institutions. This is because leaders are not making sure there are clear, well-organised plans to teach pupils about these things.

Some parents and carers are concerned that pupils behave poorly at the school. Not all pupils enjoy school enough. We heard about pupils who are frightened when fights occur or lack enough confidence to use the school toilets. However, other parents are more positive about pupils' behaviour. We saw pupils who were respectful to one another and worked hard in lessons.

Staff communicate well with each other to tackle any concerns raised about bullying. When pupils say they stay off school because they are being bullied, attendance workers make sure senior leaders are alerted to this. Leaders then act promptly to do something about it.

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

Trustees have decided that the school should join the Inspire Partnership Academy Trust. Prior to this decision, leaders and governors were not effective in tackling weaknesses in the school. The trust started work in the school in January 2020. At the time of the inspection leaders from the trust had begun to provide intensive support for school leaders. After just a few weeks of this work there is not enough evidence to demonstrate that leaders now have the capacity to secure the necessary improvements.

Leaders have not shared the responsibility for leading different subjects with a range of staff. This has meant too little has been done to improve the way lessons are sequenced and organised. As a result, pupils do not benefit from subjects which are ambitious and challenging. For example, in mathematics and science pupils' achievement is weak. This is because teachers are unclear about how to use programmes of study to plan lessons. They do not pick up gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding well enough.

Pupils find it hard to build on what they have learned before. Teachers say that until very recently they have been left to make up ideas for lessons as they go along.

This has made their workload very challenging and demoralised some. Teachers' subject knowledge is not used effectively to help pupils understand new things.

Until very recently, leaders have failed to make sure pupils learn to read using phonics in a planned, systematic way, including in the early years. As a result, pupils do not learn to read well or early enough. Those who fall behind, including disadvantaged pupils, do not catch up quickly. Teachers have only recently been expected to follow an agreed way of teaching phonics. They have received training on this. However, the pupils who read to us were given books which did not match their reading ability.

Pupils who have SEND are not being identified accurately or early enough. They lose out on opportunities to learn more because of the disjointed way teaching is organised. Children with SEND in the early years are not considered enough when teachers decide how to organise lessons and outdoor learning.

Pupils are missing out on effective opportunities to support their personal development. Although leaders are aware of this, little has been done to fill these gaps. For example, the school council has only just been relaunched. Lessons about British values and diversity are organised in a piecemeal fashion. However, most pupils understand how to demonstrate respect for one another's beliefs. Regular assemblies help pupils to recognise achievements and develop their character.

Pupils usually behave well in lessons and try hard. However, some who spoke to us said this does not happen all the time. Pupils do look after teaching materials and take care of the books which they complete their work in.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Leaders have failed to act fully on recommendations from external checks on safeguarding. A recent check continued to report shortcomings. Some of these have not been tackled.

Staff are confused about how to report a concern about a senior colleague.

Some parents and pupils are concerned about safety in toilets. Some pupils say they do not want to use them.

Leaders and governors do not have a robust and coherent way of checking and acting on safeguarding guidance and advice.

Senior leaders and governors have a secure overview of predominant risks in the local community. However, they have failed to provide opportunities for pupils to learn how to become more resilient to these risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders and governors have not made sure that staff understand safeguarding arrangements and that identified risks are managed well. They should urgently act to help staff know how to report a concern about a senior colleague. They should fully implement all recommendations from the recent safeguarding audit.
- Leaders and governors have failed to provide pupils with adequate opportunities to learn across the range of subjects taught. Staff do not have a shared understanding about what leaders expect pupils to learn and remember. Leaders and governors should ensure that an effective, agreed programme of lessons is introduced and consistently implemented across the whole school. They should check that this is enabling pupils to learn and remember enough to prepare them for the next stage of their education.
- Staff are not implementing the agreed programme for teaching phonics well enough. They do not check carefully enough that pupils read books which match their reading ability. Pupils who find it hard to learn to read are not catching up. Leaders should ensure that all staff have adequate skills to help pupils learn to read right from the start of school.
- Leaders and governors have not made sure staff understand their priorities for improving the school's effectiveness. This has meant that leaders have not tackled weaknesses quickly or effectively enough until very recently. They need to make their intentions and timescales for improvement crystal clear.
- Pupils with SEND get a poor deal because teachers do not know enough about how to identify and meet their needs. Leaders need to provide effective training to ensure that teaching staff can plan lessons and use resources which enable pupils with SEND to enjoy and benefit from an effective curriculum.
- Leaders and governors have not planned opportunities for pupils' personal development well enough. As a result, pupils have concerning gaps in their experience because of the poor curriculum. Leaders should make sure opportunities for pupils' personal development are considered systematically when implementing and further developing the curriculum.

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 the school and 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	136769
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10133419
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	857
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Keith Robinson
Headteacher	Donna Callaghan (associate headteacher)
Website	www.thesynaptictrust.org
Date of previous inspection	26–27 September 2012

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection the whole of the school’s senior leadership has changed. A major recruitment of new senior leaders took place at the end of 2018.
- Trustees have decided to incorporate the school into the Inspire Partnership Academy Trust. This trust started working with the school in January 2020.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is situated on two sites around half a mile from each other. The ‘Canterbury Hub’ site consists of purpose-built premises for pupils from Reception to Year 4.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons

responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

It is recommended that the school does not appoint newly qualified teachers.

- We met with senior leaders, a range of staff, and leaders from the incoming trust who are now supporting the school.
- We had meetings with representatives from the local governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust. We held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- We talked with pupils in lessons, around the school and at different times during the school day. We heard some pupils read to us and talked to them about their lessons.
- We spoke with parents at the start and end of the school day.
- We did deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, and geography. We discussed these subjects with pupils, staff and leaders. We visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.
- We met with designated safeguarding leaders, the family support worker and attendance workers to discuss the school's safeguarding procedures. We also reviewed documents related to safeguarding, including the school's record of checks on the suitability of staff.

Inspection team

Andrew Wright, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joy Barter	Ofsted Inspector
Jacques Szemalikowski	Ofsted Inspector
Julian Grenier	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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