

Inspection of a good school: Thingwall Primary School

Pensby Road, Thingwall, Wirral, Merseyside CH61 7UG

Inspection dates:

8 and 9 June 2021

Outcome

Thingwall Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, inspectors have some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school and rarely miss a day. They eagerly take part in the enjoyable activities and the trips that their teachers plan for them. Pupils told us that these activities help them to remember interesting facts, such as how Thingwall was an important Viking settlement in the past.

Some pupils struggle to read. Leaders do not provide these pupils with the support that they need to catch up. Consequently, some pupils are not able to access the rich curriculum that leaders provide. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. They do not consider the needs of pupils well when planning what pupils need to learn next.

Pupils feel safe. Staff encourage pupils to share any worries that they might have. Pupils receive effective pastoral support. Pupils, and parents and carers value this support. They said that staff are kind and caring.

Leaders deal with bullying promptly. They help pupils to resolve problems with others. Most pupils behave well as they move around the school. However, some pupils do not behave consistently well in lessons. At times, this disrupts the learning of others. Some pupils do not behave as well as they should in the playground. Some staff accept boisterous behaviour.

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

Leaders and governors have thought carefully about what they want pupils to learn. Curriculum plans make it clear exactly what should be taught from the Reception Year to Year 6. They also outline the order that new knowledge should be taught. However, some teachers do not adapt curriculum plans well in the light of what they know about their pupils. They do not think carefully about how to present new knowledge and information.

This is especially true for pupils who struggle to read and for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Consequently, at times, pupils do not progress through the curriculum as well as they should.

When teachers do not think carefully about how to present new information, some pupils become distracted and fidgety in lessons. Other pupils misbehave. To compound this, some staff do not consistently make their expectations of behaviour clear. They do not challenge low-level disruption.

Leaders have not been successful in developing the reading curriculum. Some aspects of reading are not working well. This is despite the fact that leaders have improved the quality and suitability of the books that pupils read. Some pupils have fallen behind in their reading and have considerable gaps in their phonics knowledge. This is because their teachers do not ensure that pupils can quickly recall the sounds that they have learned. Some pupils are unable to decode unfamiliar words or read fluently. This is particularly the case for a significant group of pupils in Year 1 and for some children in the Reception Year. Leaders and governors have not ensured that the support designed to help pupils to catch up with their reading is working effectively.

Conversely, in some subject areas, such as history or mathematics, pupils' knowledge has deepened over time. For example, older pupils use what they learned in key stage 1 to help them recall all of their multiplication tables and to solve complex mathematical problems. However, some teachers do not adapt the curriculum in these subjects as effectively as they should for pupils with SEND.

Pupils told inspectors that staff are supportive and help them sort out any minor squabbles, including any bullying. Some pupils do not behave as well as they should at breaktimes. Leaders believe that the restrictions imposed by the pandemic have had a negative impact on pupils' ability to mix socially and to meet the expectations of the school's behaviour code. That said, pupils' inappropriate behaviour goes unchallenged by some staff. It prevents some pupils from enjoying social times.

Parents praise the staff for 'going the extra mile' to make everyone feel welcome at the school. They also appreciate the valuable emotional support that leaders provided for pupils on their return to school as the restrictions from the third national lockdown eased. Pupils in Year 6 feel well prepared for moving on to their new schools in September 2021.

Leaders have ensured that pupils are well prepared for living in a diverse society. Pupils have ample opportunity to develop new interests. Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of sporting, creative, and musical activities. They help others by raising funds for local charities.

In discussion with the headteacher and governors, we agreed that the teaching of reading may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that pupils are kept safe. They keep a close eye on vulnerable pupils. Leaders work with other agencies to ensure that these pupils get the support that they need. They keep meticulous records to ensure that the support that they provide to pupils is consistent.

Leaders are vigilant to potential dangers that pupils might face. They ensure that pupils build up knowledge and resilience to keep themselves safe. Pupils feel confident in raising concerns with adults when they are worried about something. Pupils are well informed about how to stay safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils' behaviour in the playground and in lessons is not consistently positive. Some pupils do not enjoy breaktimes. Learning for some pupils in the classroom is also disrupted. Leaders need to help pupils to overcome any difficulties that they have in managing their own behaviour. Leaders need to ensure that all staff maintain the highest expectations of behaviour so that all pupils achieve well in lessons and enjoy socialising with their friends at breaktimes.
- Some pupils have significant gaps in their reading knowledge. They are not able to access the curriculum as well as they should. Leaders and governors need to ensure that pupils who are struggling to read accurately or fluently get the support that they need.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Some teachers do not ensure that curriculum plans are suitably adapted to help pupils learn. Teachers should raise their expectations of what pupils can do and sequence new learning so that it successfully builds on pupils' prior learning. This is especially true for pupils with SEND.

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 or outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that a good 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 the school to be good on 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 information from Parent View 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 [here](#).

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	105051
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10193936
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gordon Lester
Headteacher	Danielle Evans
Website	www.thingwall.eschools.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	17 and 18 May 2016

Information about this school

- This is a slightly smaller-than-average primary school.
- A new acting deputy headteacher was appointed in April 2021.
- A new chair of governors has been appointed since the time of the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school, and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator and a group of governors, including the chair of governors.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation for safeguarding, including: the school's single central register of staff and visitors; staff training records; records of safeguarding; and samples of the records kept on individual pupils.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, and history. They talked with leaders of these subject areas. They also visited lessons, looked at examples of pupils' work, held discussions with teachers and talked with pupils.
- Inspectors looked at other records of work that the school provided, including work from religious education and from personal, health, social and economic education.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They watched pupils as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils about their experiences at school.
- Inspectors looked at the 73 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 51 free-text responses from parents to find out their views of the school. They also considered the 13 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Claire Cropper, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tina Cleugh

Ofsted Inspector

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