

Inspection of a good school: Thorntree Primary School

Thorntree Road, London, SE7 8AE

Inspection dates:

3 and 4 November 2021

Outcome

Thorntree Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and adults in this school create a strong sense of family and community. They care for and respect each other. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils are polite, courteous, and considerate. They behave sensibly both in and out of lessons. They contribute to discussions and they follow instructions from adults promptly.

Pupils like coming to school. They feel safe because they are well cared for by the adults around them. Leaders ensure that no pupil leaves the school feeling upset or sad. They work hard to resolve any issues that arise before the end of each school day. One cannot help but notice pupils' and adults' genuine joy of being in school. Pupils value the friendships they make at Thorntree.

Leaders are clear about how to deal with bullying when it arises. Pupils have every confidence that if it occurs, adults will deal with it promptly and effectively. Staff are vigilant. They are quick to identify and address unkind behaviour or similar concerns.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils' learning. They make sure that pupils learn to read well. However, in some subjects, leaders' expectations for what pupils need to know and remember are not fully established.

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

Leaders value the importance of learning how to read. They have put in place a phonics programme which starts as soon as pupils join in the Nursery. Pupils learn phonics every day. They receive many opportunities to practise the sounds they have already been taught. Leaders have also invested in books which match the sounds that the pupils have learned in phonics. However, a small number of staff have not received recent, up-to-date training on early reading. Leaders know about this and have put suitable plans in place to address this gap promptly.

Pupils learn well but some areas of the curriculum are more developed than others. In mathematics, for example, teachers receive helpful guidance from leaders on how to deliver the detailed curriculum. Plans follow a clear sequence which allows pupils to develop a secure understanding of mathematical concepts. Children in the early years are supported to develop a good understanding of numbers. Across the school, teachers build on what pupils already know to support them in learning new ideas and concepts. As a result, pupils achieve well.

In some subjects, however, curriculum plans do not specify clearly what pupils should be taught. For example, the history curriculum does not always identify the key concepts that teachers want pupils to know and remember. On occasions, teaching introduces pupils to too much new information at once. As a result, pupils sometimes struggle to understand and recall securely important concepts.

Leaders and teachers use assessment information well. They use this information to prioritise what is being taught. This was particularly evident when pupils returned from the COVID-19 pandemic national lockdowns. The planning and teaching of the curriculum were adapted to address any gaps in pupils' learning. This helped all pupils to catch up. Adaptations are also made to enable most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to acquire and apply knowledge across the curriculum. However, there is still work to do to strengthen this area. Leaders are not complacent and have already started this process. This is bringing about the necessary improvement.

Leaders gather as much information as possible about children before they start school. They work with nearby nursery schools, parents and carers, and other professionals to ensure that children have a focused start to their education.

Pupils have a strong understanding of the value of democracy. They experienced this first-hand when they voted for their school council representatives. Adults consistently expect pupils to reflect on their behaviour and actions. Pupils learn to recognise the difference between what is right and wrong because this is highlighted in the curriculum. Pupils behave well, including in lessons.

Pupils' social skills develop well. After the COVID-19 lockdowns, leaders identified that the development of pupils' social skills needed to be prioritised. They introduced a wide range of measures to support pupils. Examples include running friendship groups and well-being clubs. Through these activities, leaders are helping pupils to build and strengthen their social skills.

Leaders and staff work together well. Staff appreciate how leaders seek ways to make their work manageable.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are safe at school. They know about ways to keep themselves safe at school, at home, or when online. There is a culture of openness at Thorntree. Staff are vigilant and they have an 'it could happen here' attitude. They report any concerns about pupils' well-being to leaders as soon as they arise.

Leaders and staff know their pupils and families very well. This allows them to put in place effective support, particularly for those identified as vulnerable or at risk. They work closely with outside agencies to secure the best possible outcomes for these pupils. Parents are confident that their children are safe at school.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- While staff are implementing the phonics programme as planned, a small number of staff have yet to receive recent, up-to-date training on the teaching of early reading. This means that their knowledge of early reading is not as detailed as it could be. Leaders should continue to ensure that all staff are trained to be expert teachers of early reading.
- The school's curriculum is not yet sufficiently well planned and sequenced in some subjects. This is because leaders have not identified the most important subject content that they want all pupils to know and remember. As a result, pupils are not remembering all of the key knowledge that they need for their future learning. However, it is clear from leaders' actions that they are taking suitable steps to address this. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied. Leaders should continue to develop and refine curriculum plans so that teachers know exactly what knowledge should be emphasised when delivering 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 or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 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 Ofsted 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.

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	100142
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10199990
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Matthew Warburton
Headteacher	Ann Marie Walker
Website	www.thorntree.greenwich.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	14 – 15 September 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher was appointed after the previous inspection.
- The school does not currently use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The inspector spoke with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, curriculum leaders and members of the governing body, including the chair of governors. The inspector also spoke with the head of the local authority's school improvement services.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, history and mathematics. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector also looked at other curriculum plans and spoke to the special educational needs coordinator.
- When inspecting safeguarding, the inspector looked at the single central record, analysed safeguarding records and referrals, observed pupils in and out of lessons, spoke to parents, met with a range of staff, and talked to governors about safeguarding.
- The responses to Ofsted's surveys for parents and staff were also considered.

Inspection team

Edison David, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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