

# Inspection of a good school: Thomas Harding Junior School

Thomas Harding Junior School, Fullers Hill, Chesham, Buckinghamshire HP5 1LR

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Inspection dates:

9 and 10 November 2021

## Outcome

Thomas Harding Junior School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy and love coming to Thomas Harding school. This school has a positive buzz of excitement as pupils engage readily with their learning. They are safe and looked after well. Pupils are at the heart of everything staff do. Leaders make sure that every child is valued. Consequently, pupils are proud of their school, and they thrive.

The learning environment is vibrant. Motivating displays celebrate the academic and wider curriculum. Staff have high expectations for what pupils can achieve. This is an energising place to be. Pupils do well because of a carefully constructed curriculum underpinned by the school's values of aspiration, success, pride, integrity, resilience and equality. The school's values are truly lived by everyone day to day.

Pupils get on harmoniously and play together respectfully. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils say there is no bullying at this school. They say that if they were to experience any unkindness, they are confident that staff would sort out their concerns.

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

Leaders at all levels are highly effective and believe that their staff are the vital resource. They make sure that staff workload is managed effectively. A strong team ethos shines through this school. The teachers and support staff are willing to go the extra mile to benefit all pupils. A member of staff said, 'Everyone pulls together led by the top, it's all for the pupils'.

Parents are full of praise for what the school does for their children. As one parent said, 'Thomas Harding is a wonderful school. The staff are so warm and friendly and inspire my children'.

Leaders constantly review the curriculum to make sure that it builds on what pupils have already learned. Teachers monitor pupils' progress across the curriculum carefully and

provide pupils with timely support when necessary. Pupils' excellent behaviour contributes to their learning success.

Mathematics is a subject area that typifies the approach the school takes across the curriculum. Teachers' strong subject knowledge in mathematics enables them to deliver the curriculum expertly. Teachers build pupils' resilience. As one pupil said, 'We work together as a team, it doesn't matter if you get it wrong because we help each other'.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do well. Teaching staff know how to support pupils to overcome barriers to learning. They break down learning successfully into small steps so that pupils with SEND can achieve more easily. Leaders are working currently to strengthen the communication among staff, parents and carers about the provision for pupils with SEND.

The headteacher ensures that staff have suitable training to help them deliver the well-planned curriculum. French is an example of a curriculum area that has recently been reviewed, and improved plans put in place. There has not been enough time to embed new teaching plans fully in all year groups so that pupils always commit their learning to long-term memory.

Leaders prioritise reading. Staff take every opportunity to encourage pupils to read. Every nook and cranny has books and exciting displays about reading. Leaders carefully check which pupils need extra help with their phonics knowledge. Teachers and teaching assistants provide expert support for early reading. They have recently checked that early reading books match pupils' phonic ability and are supplementing these resources with a new reading scheme.

Pupils learn so much more than academic subjects. There is a rich tapestry of personal development opportunities at this school. There is a very wide range of clubs and additional activities that cater for all abilities. They are designed to extend and foster interest, personal skills and cultural experiences. For example, Year 3 pupils at the time of inspection visited Bletchley Park to bring to life their understanding of the importance of computing.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding culture is strong because staff know pupils so well and take steps to protect them from harm. Staff are well trained and alert to possible safeguarding concerns, including reference to latest government advice.

Any identified issues about pupils are communicated well and every effort is made by school staff to support pupils, including engaging with outside agencies.

Leaders, including the local governing board and the trust, check that staff are suitable to work with children. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with any safeguarding concern about adults who work at the school.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There has not been enough time to embed the planned improvements across the whole curriculum so that pupils' work is consistently of the highest quality. For example, there are variations in the consistency of pupils' learning in French. Leaders should make sure that teaching ensures that new learning always builds on pupils' previous secure knowledge.

## 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 first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Thomas Harding Junior School, to be good in March 2015.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	145069
<b>Local authority</b>	Buckinghamshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10203157
<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	223
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Malcolm Peckham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mel Nugent
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thomasharding.org.uk">www.thomasharding.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Since the last inspection, a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed.
- Thomas Harding Junior School converted to become an academy on 4 October 2017, joining the Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools' Trust. When its predecessor school, Thomas Harding Junior School, was last inspected by Ofsted in March 2015, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## 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 their evaluation.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, inclusion manager, subject leaders and other members of staff. She also spoke with the chief executive officer of the multi-academy trust, the school improvement manager and a local governor.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and French. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Various other subject curriculum documents and plans were reviewed.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors viewed the school's website and policies, met with the designated safeguarding leader and deputy, spoke with pupils and staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school, and spoke with governors.
- The inspector spoke to parents and staff to gather their views. The inspector looked at 53 responses to Parent View, including 32 free-text responses. The inspector also considered 20 responses to the staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Sue Child, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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