

Inspection of Thirsk Community Primary School

Hambleton Place, Thirsk, North Yorkshire YO7 1SL

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

One pupil told an inspector that, 'The school is a compassionate place where everyone has a friend.' Inspectors agree. Pupils trust adults to listen to them and resolve issues to help to keep them safe. Pupils can explain how to keep themselves safe and manage the risks they might face outside school or online. Good behaviour in lessons and at breaktime is the norm. Pupils have excellent manners. The dining hall resounds with the sound of pupils saying 'please' and 'thank you'. Pupils take time to mix, talk and enjoy eating their lunch with different friends.

Pupils are proud of their school and its environment. They talk enthusiastically about reading. Pupils aspire to read the '100 best books' for their key stage. Pupils proudly wear badges showing they have gone over and above in meeting school values. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, matched by pupils' high expectations of themselves. In Year 4, pupils share their ambitions in learning on a display board. Some pupils aspire to improve their handwriting or learn the six times tables. Learning is fun. Year 5 pupils enjoyed finding the cause of death of Ulf the Viking, whose body outline was taped on the floor as part of history enrichment week.

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

Leaders have addressed previous weaknesses in reading effectively. Phonics teaching begins in Nursery. Children learn about voice sound and pitch. From Reception, adults teach pupils about letters and sounds and how to blend them. Children quickly gain a secure knowledge of sounds and understand how to read simple words. This continues into Year 1, where pupils use phonics knowledge to decode more complex words.

Leaders ensure reading has a high profile. Reading is celebrated in displays throughout school. 'Reading Ambassadors' promote reading in newsletters. Pupils scramble to read one of the '100 books to read' marked with a gold sticker. Pupils love borrowing books from the library. Adults ensure that the majority of pupils practise reading with books that match their reading ability and needs. This is not the case for some pupils. Where books are not well matched, pupils' confidence in reading is less developed.

Leaders have made sure that most subjects in the curriculum, including mathematics, science and art and design, are well planned and sequenced. Pupils know the key ideas that are threaded through these subjects. Lessons build pupils' knowledge progressively. Pupils can connect new learning to what they already know. In some subjects, planning is weaker and lacks this careful sequencing, making learning less secure.

Pupils have many opportunities to broaden and deepen their personal development. Leaders make learning interesting and memorable. History enrichment week offered extra activities to broaden pupils' understanding of the local area. Pupils enjoyed working with a living history re-enactor, who demonstrated Viking weapons, clothing

and fighting techniques. In collective worship, pupils consider themes on fundamental British values. Teachers address religious festivals, the role of Unicef and children's rights. Pupils enjoy listening to music from the composer of the month, attending residential weeks or joining school clubs like guitar or cheerleading. These activities build pupils' confidence and self-esteem.

Pupils' positive attitudes to learning help them achieve well. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils know the new behaviour policy and appreciate its simple instruction to be 'ready, respectful, safe'. Children in early years are independent. They play and work cooperatively. Teachers plan purposeful and industrious activities to support their learning. Adults ensure good-quality discussion and questioning support children's language development well.

Leaders ensure every effort is made to secure the best possible provision and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders are determined that no one will miss out. All pupils have access to the full curriculum, adapted to meet their needs. Pupils make good progress in their learning. Adults plan small steps that are ambitious but realistic. Staff promptly spot potential barriers to learning. This helps them quickly put in place the extra help and support some pupils need.

Leaders have created a school ethos in which all are valued and respected. A strong and well-informed governing body is very much part of the school team. Staff look out for each other. They care about each other's welfare and well-being. All report being proud to work in the school. Relationships with parents are strong and improving. Teachers' greater cooperation and communication with families over the pandemic have enhanced the school's standing and reputation in the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school's culture of vigilance starts from the moment pupils are met by staff at the gate. The well-being of pupils is a fundamental priority for staff. The pastoral team meets fortnightly to review all concerns. Staff undertake safeguarding training at the start of each academic year. Refresher training is given at regular intervals. The school works closely with external agencies to secure the best and most appropriate help for any pupil who needs it. Several leaders and governors are appropriately trained to manage staff and governor recruitment. Safeguarding is a significant part of the induction process for new staff and governors.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subjects in the curriculum are not as well planned and sequenced as others. In these subjects, key ideas are less clear. This means pupils find it more difficult to remember important ideas and connect new learning to what they know. Leaders need to ensure that the quality of the curriculum is equally strong in all areas. Leaders have already taken action to plan next year's curriculum and train staff in how to deliver it. For this reason, the transitional arrangement has been applied.
- A minority of younger pupils are given books to practise their reading that are too difficult. They cannot read them accurately or understand what they are reading. Pupils should read books that encourage their fluency and help them build their self-belief and confidence as a reader.

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	121365
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10200691
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	190
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Stuart Mountford
Headteacher	Richard Chandler
Website	www.thirsk-pri.n-yorks.sch.uk/
Dates of previous inspection	6 and 15 March 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The deputy headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders from the school, four members of the local governing body and a local authority development partner.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and personal, social and health education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors also listened to some pupils read.

- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lesson visits and at break and lunchtime. They spoke to pupils about their views on behaviour and a group of pupils gave an inspector a guided tour of the school.
- Safeguarding records, including the single central record, were reviewed. The inspectors talked to pupils and staff about their views of safeguarding.
- The views of 24 parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, were considered.
- The inspectors met with staff to discuss their well-being and workload. Inspectors considered the 28 responses from Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Phil Scott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Andrew Soutar

Ofsted Inspector

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