

Inspection of a good school: Thornhill Primary School

Byron Road, Thornhill, Southampton, Hampshire SO19 6FH

Inspection dates:

2 and 3 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are happy and feel safe. Adults at Thornhill are kind and supportive. When pupils report bullying, adults are quick to help so that issues are promptly resolved.

Everyone at Thornhill wants pupils to 'be the best that they can be'. Teachers are providing most pupils with learning that develops their knowledge and skills, especially in mathematics, physical education and early reading.

In other subjects, pupils do not receive teaching that ensures they learn consistently well. While pupils have had some opportunities to extend their horizons, leaders acknowledge that pupils' personal development has not been wide enough. Parents and carers and pupils would like the school to increase the range of activities on offer.

Pupils understand the school's values of 'Safe, ready, respect'. Almost all of them follow the rules well and they trust their teachers to look after them. Most pupils pay attention in class and try their best, but a few pupils do not behave well. A small number of parents would like to see teachers take a stronger line with behaviour and this is something the school is rightly working on.

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

The school has had significant changes in leadership over the last two years. With the support of the Hamwic Trust, leaders have prioritised the teaching of reading. Standards are low, but leaders' actions have brought about rapid improvement.

The school's approach to early reading is successful. In Reception and key stage 1, there is a sharp focus on developing children's early language. Phonics is well organised.

Training and support from a local English hub continue to enhance staff's subject knowledge and expertise. Adults read often with pupils in school and choose books for pupils that are well matched to the sounds they are learning. Teachers check how well pupils are learning in reading. They provide daily support to help pupils at risk of falling behind. Reception teachers understand how children's early development provides a base for learning in key stage 1 and beyond. The school's approach to the teaching of early reading ensures that pupils are becoming competent readers.

The reading curriculum for pupils in key stage 2 does not sufficiently develop pupils' knowledge and skills. Therefore, pupils are not confident to talk about books they are reading. Some older pupils have not learned phonics well. They do not have the strategies they need to help them read fluently.

Leaders have recently improved the mathematics curriculum. Teachers help pupils to build on what they have already learned. Teachers have a clear rationale for adapting the curriculum to suit pupils at Thornhill. They provide daily opportunities for pupils to revise their number knowledge. Consequently, pupils are increasingly able to count and calculate with confidence.

Most other subjects are not well taught. There are clearly sequenced plans, but leaders do not make sure that teachers follow them. As a result, pupils do not build on what they already know. They do not apply their knowledge to other subjects. Some leaders do not have a secure understanding of the early years foundation stage curriculum. They do not ensure that the curriculum builds on the knowledge and skills pupils acquire from the time they start school.

Leaders have quickly improved the range of support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Clear targets are used to support pupils in English and mathematics. Staff are quick to identify pupils' needs and leaders work well with a range of agencies to make sure that pupils get the right help and support.

Pupils lack sufficient opportunities to develop their character and talents through the wider curriculum. Pupils demonstrate respect for each other and understand the democratic work of the school council. Leaders are working to provide better opportunities for pupils to contribute more to their school and their community.

School governors and officers of the trust have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Trust officers, leaders and teachers are working well together. Staff speak highly of the support they receive from senior and middle leaders. The school is well placed to improve the current trend of improvement.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that reading in key stage 2, pupils' behaviour, the curriculum in foundation subjects and pupils' wider development may usefully serve as focuses for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff keep pupils safe. They pass on their concerns in a prompt and clear manner. Leaders act tenaciously to ensure that they follow up any signs of a pupil being at risk. The school works well with external agencies to safeguard children and to ensure that pupils receive the right support at the right time. Leaders have secure and effective recruitment systems in place. Governors understand their responsibilities. They keep the school's systems under regular review. Pupils speak confidently about how the school teaches them to stay safe, including ongoing teaching about staying safe online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The reading curriculum in key stage 2 does not sufficiently develop pupils' reading knowledge and skills. Too few pupils demonstrate fluency, confidence and enjoyment in reading. Leaders need to develop the reading offer in key stage 2 to ensure that pupils have a reading curriculum that develops their confidence and enjoyment.
- Some pupils do not behave with consistently high levels of respect for others. They have negative attitudes to learning and try to disrupt the learning of others. Leaders are already putting clear systems and effective support in place to help pupils. This needs to continue to ensure that all pupils have the support that they need to be successful in their education.
- Not all teachers teach what they should in the foundation subjects. Teachers do not check pupils' understanding systematically and they do not build on pupils' prior learning. Leaders do not ensure that the curriculum builds on the knowledge and skills pupils acquire from the time they start school. Pupils are not helped to integrate new knowledge into larger ideas. Leaders must make sure that teachers implement the agreed curriculum so that pupils build cumulatively sufficient knowledge across subjects.
- Too few pupils have sufficient opportunities to develop their character and talents. Leaders should prioritise the personal development opportunities for all pupils.

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 a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school, Thornhill Primary School, to be good on 7 September 2017.

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	145222
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	10203167
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	391
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Robert Farmer
Headteacher	Alison Beechurst
Website	www.thornhillsch.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school's current headteacher took up post in September 2021. An interim headteacher had been in post since January 2021. Many of the school's governors are also new to their roles. Officers of Hamwic Education Trust have been working closely with school leaders since the appointment of the interim headteacher.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had 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 her evaluation of the school.

- The inspector met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, subject leaders and groups of staff and pupils. She spoke with a representative of the governing body and representatives of Hamwic Education Trust. She visited the outdoor learning areas.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and PE. To aid this, she spoke with leaders, pupils and staff, visited lessons, listened to pupils read to adults in school, and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector considered 14 responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including 14 free-text responses, and 17 responses to the staff survey.
- The inspector looked at the school's record of employment checks and at a sample of the school's safeguarding records and spoke with safeguarding leaders.

Inspection team

Clare Morgan, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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