

Inspection of a good school: Thorpe Acre Infant School

Alan Moss Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 4SQ

Inspection date: 10 February 2022

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?

Thorpe Acre Infant School is a happy and inclusive place.

Pupils know how the school's 'Stars' help them to do well. They understand that it is important to be determined, be proud, be kind, be caring, to be independent and to reach high. Pupils say that these values are important to them.

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They enjoy receiving points for positive conduct. They are kind and considerate to each other. Pupils are inclusive. They know that it is important to treat everybody equally.

Poor behaviour is rare. When it does occur, it is dealt with well. Poor behaviour is rarely repeated. Leaders' records show that bullying is very rare. However, pupils do not understand what bullying is. They do not distinguish between poor behaviour and bullying. They do not know the different forms that bullying can take.

Pupils work hard in lessons. They listen attentively and follow instructions quickly. However, there are some parts of the school's curriculum that are not yet fully sequenced. This means that pupils do not systematically learn and remember curriculum content consistently across all subjects.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is tailored to the pupils of the school. It is ambitious and helps pupils to make links across different subjects. Some subjects are well sequenced. They build systematically on what pupils know and remember. However, some parts of the curriculum have not yet been sequenced carefully enough. In some cases,

the curriculum does not make clear what needs to be taught. Content does not systematically build on what pupils know and remember.

The school's phonics programme is well sequenced. Staff know the sounds that pupils should learn at each point of their education. Pupils who begin to fall behind get help the same day. Staff have been trained to deliver the phonics programme. It is taught consistently well. However, children do not get off to a quick enough start. They are not taught phonics from the very start of Reception Year. This means that children do not learn the sounds that letters represent as soon as they should.

Pupils know why reading is important. One pupil said, '... reading is good for your brain. It helps you to learn new things'. Leaders ensure that pupils read a wide range of texts during their time at the school. Pupils enjoy listening to their teachers read at the end of each day. The 'rainbow awards' motivate pupils to read regularly. Pupils enjoy taking home bedtime reading bags to share with their family. However, the school's reading curriculum beyond phonics is not well sequenced. It sets out the reading skills that pupils should acquire by the end of each year. It does not make clear the order in which these skills should be taught.

The early years curriculum is well planned and sequenced. Leaders have set out what they expect children to know and do at each point during Reception Year. The curriculum is well taught. However, senior leaders do not have a secure enough understanding of the early years curriculum. This means that they are unable to hold the early years staff to account for its implementation and effectiveness.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) knows these pupils well. She ensures that these pupils' needs are understood and that the help they receive is effective. Pupils who need extra help to improve their speech and language are supported effectively.

Pupils' personal development is well catered for. Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities that are available to them, including breakfast club, after-school club, choir and learning to play the recorder. School councillors are proud of their role. They are enthusiastic about the gardening club that they are establishing.

The work of the governing body is well organised. Governors understand the school's curriculum and are knowledgeable about the improvements that have been recently secured. They are positive about the impact that the interim executive headteacher has had during her short time in post. The governing body has a clear and ambitious vision for the future substantive leadership model for the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Relationships between staff and pupils are positive. Staff know pupils well and quickly pick up on any signs that indicate that they might need help. Leaders deal promptly with any concerns, liaising effectively with external agencies where necessary.

Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to stay safe. They know how to stay safe online. As one pupil said, 'We have to be careful who we talk to. There are some bad guys out there.'

Safeguarding records are robust and fit for purpose.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Phonics is not taught from the beginning of Reception Year. This means that children do not learn the sounds that they need to quickly enough. Leaders should ensure that phonics is taught from the very start of Reception Year.
- The majority of the school's curriculum is well planned and sequenced. However, there are some parts where it is not. This means that the curriculum does not make clear what pupils need to know and remember at each stage of their education. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is consistently well planned and sequenced across all subjects.
- Senior leaders do not know the early years curriculum well enough. This means that they cannot hold leaders and staff in early years to account for how effectively the curriculum is implemented. Leaders should ensure that they have a secure understanding of the early years curriculum and use this to hold early years practitioners to account for its impact.
- Pupils do not understand what bullying is. They confuse instances of poor behaviour with bullying. This means that they cannot identify bullying and deal with it accordingly. Leaders should ensure that pupils know what bullying is and the different forms it can take.

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 school to be good in January 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	119958
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10212525
Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	142
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anne Johnson
Headteacher	Jo Beaumont (Interim Executive Headteacher)
Website	www.tais.leics.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 January 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- An interim executive headteacher took up post in September 2021. This is for a period of three terms.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders, the SENCo and the early years leader.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in three subjects: reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, visited lessons, looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and met with teachers and pupils. An inspector also looked at curriculum documentation for history and science.

- The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 14 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and 11 written comments from parents and carers. They also considered the nine responses to Ofsted's staff survey. An inspector spoke informally to parents outside the school.
- The lead inspector met with safeguarding leaders. He reviewed school documents relating to safeguarding and attendance.

Inspection team

Vic Wilkinson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Shaheen Hussain

Her Majesty's Inspector

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