

# Inspection of a good school: Thorns Community Infant School

Blackthorn Road, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 2DS

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Inspection dates: 1 and 2 March 2022

## Outcome

Thorns Community Infant School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are very happy at Thorns Community Infant School. The school aims for all its pupils to be 'successful, confident learners', and they are. The school environment is calm and orderly, with the buzz of excited, purposeful learning shining through.

Pupils feel safe at school. Staff know pupils extremely well and care for them. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils say bullying does not really happen here, and they trust adults to stop any unkindness as soon as it starts. Staff have high expectations, and pupils respond accordingly. Learning takes place without unnecessary interruption.

Pupils love learning. They are eager to find out new things. Staff make use of every learning opportunity. Leaders have developed a high-quality outdoor environment to support learning.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. They valued the support given to them and their children throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff prioritised the well-being of the children during this period. One parent summed up the comments of many saying, 'My children really thrive here.'

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

Leaders have planned an ambitious, broad and rich curriculum. Learning takes place in a logical way from the outset. Teachers know what to teach, when and why. They know the vocabulary they want pupils to know, understand and use. Leaders regularly monitor and review subjects to check that the curriculum is being delivered in the way it is intended to be. However, partly because of the pandemic, some subjects have not yet been reviewed in the same depth as others.

Children settle extremely well to life in Reception. They are confident and enthusiastic learners. The indoor and outdoor environments are attractive and well resourced. Staff

make learning fun and engaging. Happy, smiley faces are everywhere. Children make good progress and achieve well.

Leaders want all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to read well and enjoy books, and take plenty of actions to make sure that this happens. Leaders have recently introduced a new scheme for the teaching of phonics. All staff received effective training and support in the teaching of early reading. As a result, staff's subject knowledge is good. They teach phonics well.

Phonics teaching starts as soon as children join Reception. Staff quickly support pupils who are finding learning to read more difficult, so they do not struggle. Teachers regularly check pupils' phonics knowledge to ensure books match the sounds they know. Pupils decode and blend unknown words confidently. They quickly become fluent in reading, which helps their understanding of other subjects.

Staff plan story times exceptionally well. Staff choose books to support topics and pupils' understanding of the world. Pupils listen intently and eagerly. They anticipate what will happen next.

Mathematics also starts in Reception. Leaders are extremely knowledgeable and have planned a strong, coherent curriculum. Staff appreciate the high-quality training and support they receive in mathematics. Consequently, staff are confident in their teaching of the subject and their subject knowledge has increased. Pupils develop strong mathematical reasoning and fluency skills. They have a secure knowledge of number facts. Leaders have considered the language and vocabulary they want pupils to know in mathematics. Staff model and pupils practise sentence stems in lessons to explain reasoning and understanding. Teachers challenge all pupils to do their best. Pupils enjoy this challenge and respond well.

Pupils take pride in their music lessons. They enjoy learning to play musical instruments correctly. They use language such as 'pulse', 'pitch' and 'tempo' confidently. Pupils know about composing music and composers such as Mozart and Beethoven.

Leaders are equally ambitious for pupils with SEND. Leaders quickly identify pupils who need additional support. Staff use strategies effectively so pupils with SEND can learn alongside others. Leaders ensure pupils with SEND take part in all aspects of school life. They receive every opportunity to succeed.

Teachers expect good handwriting and presentation in all lessons. However, standards have slipped for some pupils because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Leaders have plans in place to ensure their high expectations return.

Pupils enjoy a wide range of opportunities in school. There is a swimming pool on site. This helps pupils develop confident water skills and learn to swim. Visits and visitors support the topics and pupils' knowledge of the world in which they live. Pupils vote on who should take on roles in school. They can take part in after-school clubs, and leaders track attendance to ensure all pupils participate at some level. They learn about different cultures and faiths. These activities help pupils' wider personal development.

Governors ensure they gather high-quality information about the life and work of the school. This helps them offer effective support and challenge. Staff are extremely proud to work at the school. They feel well supported by leaders and governors.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school prides itself on its relationships with parents and carers. Leaders and staff know their families well. They are vigilant to any changes in behaviour or signs of concern. There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Leaders teach pupils how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Visits by the police or fire brigade help pupils understand why they should take care.

Governors take their responsibilities seriously. They ensure they and all staff receive regular training and that the school accesses external help when required. They check staff have undergone the appropriate recruitment checks before their appointment

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

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

- Leaders have a planned cycle of reviewing and evaluating the curriculum. Some subjects are at an early stage in this plan. This means leaders cannot be certain that all subjects are equally well implemented. Leaders should quickly evaluate the remaining subjects to ensure all subjects are of the highest quality.

## **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 February 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	125550
<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10212418
<b>Type of school</b>	Infant
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 7
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	154
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Jonathan Cousins
<b>Headteacher</b>	Liz Bradbury (Executive Headteacher)
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thornsinfantschool.com">www.thornsinfantschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	7 February 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school is part of the Park Hill Thorns Federation.

## 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 leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, the assistant headteacher, other leaders within the school and teaching and non-teaching staff. She also met with six members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector met with key staff responsible for safeguarding and checked the single central record and procedures for the recruitment of staff. She discussed procedures and policies relating to safeguarding and the welfare of pupils.
- The inspector carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, she discussed the curriculum with subject leaders,

visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in class and at other times during the day. She spoke with parents, staff and pupils about behaviour in school.
- The inspector spoke with parents at the end of the school day. She considered the responses, including free-text comments, to the Ofsted Parent View online questionnaire. She took account of responses to the staff and pupil questionnaires.
- The inspector reviewed the school's website and public information.

### **Inspection team**

Tina Willmott, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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