

Inspection of a good school: Thorpe Hall Primary School

123 Hale End Road, Walthamstow, London E17 4DP

Inspection dates:

6 and 7 December 2022

Outcome

Thorpe Hall Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy coming to this school. Staff know individual pupils and their families really well. They keep pupils safe and well cared for at all times. Staff and pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. Leaders aspire for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve highly.

Pupils behave well in lessons and at playtimes. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. Pupils like to work hard and achieve well. They look after each other and form close and caring friendships. Incidents of bullying are never tolerated, and leaders respond to these effectively. Pupils trust adults in school to help them if needed.

Leaders ensure that pupils' wider development is prioritised. Pupils enjoy the exciting visits, special events and clubs they can take part in. Staff encourage pupils to take on responsibilities, which they do with great enthusiasm. Pupils enjoy making a contribution to their school and community. They all spoke with great happiness about seeing Pebbles, the school dog, around the school.

Parents and carers were positive about the school and appreciated the care their children receive from an early age.

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

Leaders have developed a well-sequenced and ambitious curriculum. Subject leaders have effective professional development opportunities to enhance their expertise. Leaders' curricular thinking ensures that pupils secure important knowledge and key vocabulary. Teaching ensures that pupils stay on task and do not interrupt the learning of others.

In a small number of subjects, leaders' curriculum design is not as ambitious. It does not identify the precise knowledge and skills that pupils need to be taught. This can lead to confusion and gaps in pupils' understanding.

In most subjects, including mathematics, geography, and art and design, leaders have introduced a well-ordered curriculum that starts in the early years. Staff deliver these subjects with enthusiasm and confidence. They check pupils' understanding before moving on to new content. This helps pupils to achieve well across many subjects, including mathematics. For instance, Year 5 pupils solved mathematical problems using improper fractions with clear strategies. Children in the early years build strong early foundations in counting. In art, children learn to mix primary colours at an early age. Teaching builds on these skills so that pupils deepen understanding. For instance, Year 2 pupils mixed a wide range of vivid colours to interpret and express their emotions on hearing the music of Beethoven and Mozart. In geography, Year 6 pupils have well-embedded map-reading skills which helped them to find latitude and longitude accurately.

A love of reading permeates across the whole school. All staff read to pupils daily during story times. Well-stocked book areas and the school library contain a range of books which pupils enjoy reading. Year 6 pupils enjoyed helping to run the school library.

Leaders have implemented a new approach to teaching phonics in Reception and key stage 1. In early years, children regularly hear songs, traditional stories and rhymes. Children get off to a good start in Nursery and Reception. Staff help children to develop communication and language skills. They support children to begin to decode and blend with accuracy. However, the support provided for a small number of pupils who struggle to read is not fully effective. This is because not all staff implement phonics teaching consistently well.

Pupils with SEND benefit from tailored support. Leaders make sure that all pupils with SEND follow a full and equally ambitious curriculum. When required, teachers make necessary adjustments and provide effective support matched to pupils' individual needs. Leaders make good use of professionals from outside agencies to provide training for staff. This helps staff to provide bespoke support for pupils with complex and specific needs.

Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of interesting opportunities for personal development. Pupils learn about healthy relationships and the importance of having good physical and mental health. Pupils learn how to stay safe in their local community, as well as when online. They value the extensive range of leadership posts they can apply for, such as being prefects, school councillors and librarians. Leaders are committed to making sure that every pupil has access to the visits, visitors, clubs and events that are available.

Federation leaders and the governing body have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for development. They work alongside leaders to develop clear, strategic development plans, and monitor the outcomes closely. Staff appreciate leaders' care for their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have built a strong and effective safeguarding culture at this school. Staff are well trained. They know the local risks pupils may face. Leaders make sure that pupils and their families receive the help and support they need promptly.

From the early years, children learn how to keep safe. Pupils are taught about safety, including through the personal, social and health education curriculum. They are taught about dangers when online and how to report any concerns to adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Occasionally, there are inconsistencies in how early reading is taught to some pupils who struggle with phonics. This limits a minority of pupils' ability to decode and blend sounds accurately. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the skills and expertise in delivering the school's phonics programme effectively.
- In a few foundation subjects, leaders have not planned the key knowledge that pupils need to be taught and the order in which they should learn it. This sometimes leads to gaps in pupils' understanding. Leaders should ensure that all foundation subjects are planned and sequenced so that pupils build their knowledge securely over time.

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 an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 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.

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	103060
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10240443
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	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Debbie Strowbridge
Headteacher	Lisa McIntyre (Executive headteacher) Susan Biggar (Head of school)
Website	www.thorpehallprimary.com
Date of previous inspection	20 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of a hard federation, the Opossum Federation, with three other local primary schools. The four schools share the same governing body.
- The school uses no alternative providers.

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 his evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the executive headteacher, the head of school and subject leaders. The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair. He also spoke with a representative of the local authority. The inspector spoke to the chief executive officer of the federation to which the school belongs.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, and art and design. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, considered

the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector considered the curriculum in other subjects.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documentation related to safeguarding. This included the single central record of pre-employment checks.
- The inspector met with parents at the start of the school day and considered the views of parents, pupils and staff, including through responses to Ofsted's surveys.

Inspection team

Sean Flood, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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