

Inspection of Thompson Primary School

School Road, Thompson, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 1PY

Inspection dates: 6 and 7 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Thompson Primary School provides a warm, welcoming environment where pupils feel cared for and valued. Pupils are kind, polite and respectful towards staff and each other. Positive relationships between staff and pupils are a strength of the school. Parents and carers say that their children are happy and safe at this school.

Pupils are well behaved. They appreciate the rewards they receive for positive attitudes and good behaviour, such as 'green dojos'. At breaktimes, pupils from different age groups play together happily. Pupils can explain what bullying is and are confident that it does not happen. Pupils know that staff will help them when anxious or upset.

Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities and making the school better for each other. They take on roles such as school councillors and house captains. Pupils like the extra-curricular clubs on offer, such as arts and crafts and football.

Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), enjoy learning a broad and interesting curriculum. However, while the quality of education pupils receive is improving, it is not good enough. Pupils have gaps in their knowledge and understanding.

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

Leaders have created a broad and ambitious curriculum that details what they want pupils to achieve in all subjects. However, the curriculum is not taught consistently well. Teachers do not always choose the right activities to support learning. In some year groups, pupils are not getting the knowledge and skills leaders have mapped out.

Teachers do not know how best to check and respond to what pupils know and remember in all subjects. Consequently, teachers do not realise when pupils have forgotten knowledge so do not provide opportunities for pupils to review and remember. This means pupils have gaps in their knowledge.

Leaders understand the importance of pupils gaining secure reading skills as they move through the school. However, the teaching of early reading and phonics does not always help pupils learn to read well enough. Staff are not ensuring that all pupils are accessing books which contain sounds and words that they have already learned. Some pupils find their books too difficult to read accurately and fluently. Teachers sometimes do not give pupils sufficient practice to learn the phonics they have been taught. As a result, not enough pupils are making a strong start in learning to read.

Pupils talk with pleasure about books they enjoy. Younger pupils vote regularly to decide which books they want their teachers to read to them. Adults choose a range

of interesting and high-quality texts which are linked to the curriculum to help pupils gain an enjoyment of reading

Leaders accurately identify pupils' needs. Teachers make sure that pupils with SEND receive additional help in lessons. However, leaders do not make sure that pupils with individual support plans have personalised targets which are precise enough. This means that small steps of progress are difficult to measure and leaders cannot be sure whether pupils with SEND are achieving as well as they could.

Children in the early years get off to a flying start in their education. They show high levels of curiosity, enjoyment and concentration. The early years curriculum is clearly designed and sequenced. Children learn to read well and practise daily. Early years staff help children to develop a strong understanding of language and vocabulary. Children enjoy well-considered opportunities to develop their confidence and understanding of early mathematics. They manage their feelings and behaviour well and take pride in their achievements.

Pupils' wider development is at the heart of the school's work. Leaders see pupils' well-being as paramount. Staff describe how they use techniques pupils learn in yoga to ensure that pupils settle quickly to their learning. Pupils celebrate diversity and can explain how they value difference and uniqueness. In the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, pupils learn about how to keep themselves safe and healthy.

Staff are proud to work at the school and say leaders are attentive to workload and their well-being.

Governors and trustees are supportive of leaders and the school community. However, governors have not been rigorous enough in their monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education. A schedule of governor monitoring visits has now been drawn up. This is closely aligned to the school's priorities. This is enabling governors to see the school in action so they are in a position to provide the necessary challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding across the school. Staff are well trained about safeguarding. Staff are vigilant and alert to the signs of potential abuse. Leaders ensure that concerns are dealt with swiftly. Leaders make referrals to external agencies in a timely manner. Members of the local governing board carry out their statutory duties diligently.

Pupils learn what to do to keep themselves and others safe, including online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff do not teach the curriculum consistently well across classes and subjects. As a result, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Leaders should ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills they need to teach the full curriculum well.
- In some areas of the curriculum, teachers do not use assessment effectively in order to plan and deliver learning activities based on what pupils know and remember. Consequently, pupils have gaps in what they know. Leaders must ensure that teachers are sufficiently well trained so they know how to find and address gaps in pupils' knowledge
- Some staff do not always provide reading books that are well matched to pupils' needs. Similarly, staff do not always give pupils sufficient practice to help them learn the phonics they have been taught. As a result, some pupils are not developing fluency in reading quickly enough. Leaders need to ensure that pupils read books which are closely matched to their abilities and have planned opportunities to practise their phonics.
- Leaders do not ensure that individual targets for pupils with SEND are precise enough to ensure that the support they receive is as effective as possible. This means that small steps of progress cannot be evidenced and built on. Leaders need to make sure that pupils' individual targets are precise so that pupils with SEND can learn and achieve well.

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

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| Unique reference number | 144147 |
| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 10240601 |
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 4 to 11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 96 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of trust | Julie Fletcher |
| Headteacher | Lisa Heath |
| Website | http://thompson.cee.coop |
| Date of previous inspection | 2 December 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding is below average.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, geography, history and science. These included discussions with subject leaders, visits to lessons, meetings with staff and pupils and scrutiny of pupils' work. The lead inspector also listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects, including PSHE and history.
- Inspectors met the headteacher, senior leaders, support staff, members of the governing body and representatives from the trust.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including records of local governing board meetings, the school's development plan and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors scrutinised the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks, reviewed records, and spoke to the designated safeguarding lead, teachers, support staff and pupils.
- Inspectors spent time observing and speaking to pupils, including at breaktimes and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff and parents. There were 8 responses to Ofsted's staff survey, 24 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 16 responses to Ofsted's questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors considered 12 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Jo Nutbeam, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Craig Avieson | Ofsted Inspector |

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