

Inspection of a good school: Thomas Willingale Primary School and Nursery

The Broadway, Loughton, Essex IG10 3SR

Inspection dates:

25 and 26 April 2023

Outcome

Thomas Willingale Primary School and Nursery continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Thomas Willingale, pupils thrive. Pupils from all backgrounds get the support they need to do well at school. They benefit from leaders' high expectations of what they can learn and achieve.

Behaviour is very positive. In lessons, pupils take pride in their learning. In early years, children learn to be calm and concentrate. Pupils are notably polite and friendly. They go out of their way to be helpful. Pupils learn respect in a kind community. Bullying is very rare. If it occurs, it gets resolved. As a result, pupils are safe and happy.

Pupils are proud of their school. They develop their character well. Pupils understand and embody the school's values. Year 2 pupils, for example, can explain what integrity is, and they show it. Pupils enjoy lots of opportunities to develop personally. For instance, many do the Junior Duke Award.

Pupils are well prepared for their future steps. They build up the knowledge they will need for their next stage in education, including by extending their vocabulary. From a young age, pupils consider their long-term plans, for example when they dress up on 'aspiration days' in the job role they hope to do.

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

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils to learn what they need to be 'capable of anything'. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Leaders have put in place an effective curriculum. They consider carefully what they want pupils to know. Leaders break this down into incremental steps, starting in the early years. They plan how pupils will revisit learning over time. This means that pupils build up their knowledge and skills well. In key stage 1, for example, pupils know sophisticated musical terminology. In a few areas, teachers do not help pupils to make the rich connections between different strands of learning. Consequently, while pupils recall a lot

of facts and details they have learned, they do not routinely develop the depth of understanding that they could.

Teachers deliver the curriculum well. They are trained effectively and have the subject knowledge they need. Teachers plan creative and well-designed learning activities. In all year groups, they use shared strategies, such as 'echo reading' and regular songs and rhymes. This consistency helps pupils to remember what they learn. This is especially so for pupils with SEND. Staff are skilful in supporting these pupils to access the learning confidently. Mostly, teachers check pupils' understanding well. Pupils typically make strong progress. However, occasionally, teachers move on to new content before making sure that pupils are secure in what they are expected to learn. As a result, pupils, at times, do not achieve as well as they could.

There is a strong culture of reading. Leaders have put in place a well-considered phonics curriculum. Staff teach this effectively. Children in the Nursery are introduced carefully to sounds and stories so they are ready to learn phonics in Reception. When pupils fall behind, they get the help they need to catch up. Consequently, they learn to read quickly, fluently and with understanding. This includes pupils with SEND. Pupils use their phonic knowledge well in their writing. They build up their comprehension of texts. This leads to older pupils being enthusiastic and ambitious readers.

Leaders have established a clear policy and vision for how pupils should behave. Staff in all year groups apply this consistently. They have strong relationships with pupils. From when they start in early years, children respond well to high expectations and clear routines. As a result, there is very little disruption to learning.

Leaders are ambitious for pupils' personal development. Pupils learn what they need to be prepared for life in a changing world. They develop mature attitudes and values. For example, pupils with SEND explain with conviction the importance of understanding individual differences and identities.

Leaders engage the school community successfully. Parents are very positive about the school. Staff's workload and well-being are carefully considered. They feel valued, and so are highly motivated. This means the whole community works together to build a sustained, positive ethos in which pupils flourish.

Governors have the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their role effectively. They have embedded their vision for the school successfully over time. Governors support leaders well, including their well-being. Where challenge is needed, they provide this through probing questions, such as about the reading curriculum.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a vigilant culture of safeguarding. Leaders train staff thoroughly so that they know how to spot and log concerns. Case records show that leaders take prompt and diligent action when concerns arise. For example, they follow up rigorously on risks

caused by any low attendance. Leaders are tenacious with external support agencies if they need to ensure that pupils get help. Leaders and staff support vulnerable pupils and their families effectively.

Pupils learn to stay safe through the curriculum. Pupils know a lot about online safety, for example, such as about blocking, scams and the importance of privacy.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers, on occasion, do not help pupils to make the connections they could between the different things they learn. This means that pupils, at times, do not build up as deep an understanding as they could. Leaders need to ensure that teachers know how to make the rich connections identified in curriculum plans and then check that this happens. This is so that pupils build up their understanding of important concepts and develop an even more detailed knowledge than at present.
- Teachers do not always check learning as effectively as they should. As a result, occasionally, pupils move on to new content without being secure in their prior learning. Leaders should make sure that all teachers check learning effectively and, if needed, make systematic and appropriate adaptations so that pupils do not develop gaps in what they should know.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 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	115309
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10268617
Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	489
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Rhian Jenkins
Headteacher	Teresa Phillips
Website	www.thomaswillingaleprimary.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	23 and 24 November 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

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 their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with three governors, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and religious education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. In early reading, this took the form of listening to pupils read to a familiar adult.
- As part of the evaluation of the school's safeguarding processes, the inspector reviewed the school's single central record, met with the designated safeguarding lead and looked at the recording of safeguarding information.

- The inspector reviewed a range of school documents, including the school's self-evaluation form and improvement plan, curriculum plans and school policies.
- The inspector reviewed the 75 responses that were submitted by parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and considered the 51 free-text responses from parents. The inspector also considered 53 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire for school staff, and the 43 responses to the Ofsted questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Charlie Fordham, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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