

Inspection of a good school: Thorpe Acre Junior School

Alan Moss Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 4SQ

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 May 2023

Outcome

Thorpe Acre Junior School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have high aspirations for all pupils to 'learn, work and succeed together'. Staff and pupils model these expectations. Pupils behave well and take pride in their work. They try their best to be 'ready, respectful and safe'. Pupils understand the school rules and know how they help them to stay safe.

Pupils listen to and respect each other's differences. They know who to speak to if they have any worries. Staff take pupils' concerns seriously. They take appropriate action in keeping pupils safe, including when occasional incidents of bullying occur. Adults and pupils have positive relationships.

Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Leaders are ambitious that all pupils will achieve well. This includes pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities (SEND). Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective help. Pupils are proud of their achievements.

Leaders place importance on broadening pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoyed their recent visit to Beaumanor Hall. They loved the school 'Bake Off' and the recent picnic to celebrate the King's Coronation with pupils who attend the nearby infant school. Pupils welcome the opportunity to develop their leadership skills as school councillors and house captains. They attend sports clubs after school. Pupils take part in many sports competitions.

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

Leaders have designed a broad and balanced curriculum. In all subjects, the curriculum is ordered logically. Leaders have considered what Thorpe Acre pupils need to learn. Leaders have identified the precise knowledge that pupils will learn across all subjects. This knowledge connects what pupils learn currently to what they have learned before.

Leaders' recent work to improve pupils' writing has made a positive difference to pupils' learning. Pupils love to write. They are producing higher-quality pieces of writing than they have done in the past. Leaders have prioritised staff training and development in writing. However, this did not have time to show an impact on writing outcomes at the end of Year 6 in 2022.

There is a well-established culture of reading in the school. Teachers and pupils share a love of reading. Pupils access high-quality texts. There is a groan of disappointment in classrooms when teachers stop reading their stories to pupils at the end of the school day. Pupils would happily listen for much longer. Pupils who need support in learning phonics receive effective help. They read books that match their reading abilities. This helps them to become more confident, fluent readers.

In most subjects, there are systems for checking what precise knowledge pupils know. This assessment information is used well. Teachers adapt their teaching so that pupils can build on their prior learning. These systems are less well developed in some other subjects. The checks that teachers make on the precise knowledge that pupils have learned do not always inform pupils' new learning.

Staff identify the additional needs of pupils with SEND well. Staff ensure that these pupils receive appropriate support. Pupils in the communication and interaction resource base thrive because the support they receive is tailored to suit their needs. Teachers adapt learning well to support pupils. As a result, pupils with SEND enjoy their learning and achieve well.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Some pupils access support to help them manage their own behaviour. They value the time that they spend working with skilled pastoral support staff. Pupils understand the school's behaviour system. They typically behave well in lessons and during social times.

Leaders work closely with external agencies to promote pupils' attendance. There are a range of systems in place to follow up and reduce absence. However, some pupils are absent from school too often. These pupils miss important aspects of their learning.

Pupils benefit from opportunities to understand the world around them. They learn about respectful relationships and how to keep themselves safe. While pupils learn about different faiths and cultures, their knowledge of these is not secure.

Staff acknowledge that leaders support their professional development. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Governors know the school well. They carry out their roles effectively.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have rigorous procedures in place to safeguard pupils. Leaders keep detailed records. They work well with external agencies. This helps leaders to secure the help that

some pupils and their families may need. Staff receive regular safeguarding training and updates. They report any concerns promptly. Governors and leaders ensure that they make effective checks to ensure that adults are suitable to work with children.

Through the curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including when they are using the internet. They learn about what to do if they are faced with potential risks.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, assessment practices are not as fully developed as in others. In these subjects, teachers do not always identify the next steps in learning as precisely as they could. Leaders should ensure that teachers know exactly how well pupils are learning in these subjects and use this to inform their planning.
- Despite leaders' best efforts so far, too many pupils, including some pupils with SEND, are persistently absent from school. This has a negative impact on their progress through the curriculum. Leaders should continue to look at different ways to improve pupils' attendance that build on the work they have already undertaken.
- Pupils do not have a good understanding of different religions and cultures. This means that they do not understand religious differences as well as they might. Leaders need to develop opportunities for children to learn about and remember different religions and cultures so that they are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

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 February 2013.

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	119957
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10254813
Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	John Hallett
Headteacher	Jo Beaumont
Website	www.thorpeacrejuniorschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not make use of any alternative providers.
- The school has a communication and interaction resource base that accommodates 10 pupils with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and a range of other staff. The inspector met with representatives of the local governing body and spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the school's arrangements for safeguarding, the inspector reviewed school policies, procedures and records. The inspector met with the designated safeguarding lead and spoke with staff, governors and pupils about the school's approach to keeping pupils safe.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, spoke with teachers and spoke with pupils about their learning. The inspector visited lessons and looked at samples of pupils' work. She observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school. She considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector met with groups of staff and pupils and considered responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Kirsty Norbury, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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