

Inspection of a good school: Thornton Primary School

Thornton Road, Ward End, Birmingham, West Midlands B8 2LQ

Inspection dates:

23 and 24 May 2023

Outcome

Thornton Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Thornton Primary is an inclusive and welcoming place to learn. Pupils enjoy coming to school and speak of it with pride. They value the many opportunities to work together. Pupils contribute keenly to their school and the wider community. Leaders have high expectations for all pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Pupils respond to these expectations by working hard and behaving well. This enables pupils to achieve well.

Pupils are happy and safe in school. They have good relationships with staff and each other. Pupils know that if they have any problems, staff will sort things out for them. They say, 'staff look after us well, so nothing bad happens.'

Pupils understand about their rights and their responsibilities to each other and to the environment. They know that everyone is equal. Staff encourage pupils to reflect on their own beliefs and to respect the beliefs of others. Pupils do this well. Embedded expectations of equality, aspiration, resilience, teamwork and honesty are the golden thread running through everything leaders, staff and pupils do.

Parents are very supportive of the school. They have lots of positive things to say about the quality of leadership, care and education on offer.

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

Leaders are fully committed to improving standards across the whole curriculum. They have an accurate understanding of what they need to do to secure further improvements. This work is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement in most subjects.

Pupils reach high standards in writing and mathematics. However, pupils do not achieve as well in all subjects. This is because, in some subjects, leaders have not thought carefully enough about how important subject content should be sequenced and broken

down into small steps. Consequently, for some subjects, teachers' use of assessment to check on learning is not as well focused as they could be.

Reading is prioritised. Pupils have access to a wide range of high-quality texts that they talk about with enthusiasm. Pupils enjoy their chosen books during social times in quiet areas that allow them to read without interruption. Some pupils are still at the early stage of learning to read. Not all of these pupils make rapid enough progress to catch up with their peers. This is because leaders' actions do not focus sharply enough on how well these pupils are securing the knowledge they need to become fluent readers.

Pupils take great pride in their work. This is seen in books that are beautifully presented. It is also seen in excellent behaviour in lessons. Pupils listen well to their teachers and show a determination to work as hard as they can. Pupils with SEND are supported well. Leaders waste no time in identifying the extra help these pupils need to enable them to be successful. The 'Study Buddy' is led with great expertise. This special base in school provides sharply focused learning opportunities and pastoral support for pupils who need individualised, targeted help. This is complemented well by the 'Chatterbox' room. Pupils who find playtimes more difficult can come into the calming space, where they can enjoy quiet games and activities. Staff in these resource bases are committed, passionate and highly skilled.

Leaders place great emphasis on pupils' personal development. Popular after-school clubs, such as gardening club, games and art club, add to pupils' enjoyment. Visits and visitors also enrich the curriculum and extend pupils' knowledge. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures through the curriculum. This helps prepare them for life in modern Britain. Lessons in personal, social, health and economic education ensure that pupils understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and relationships. Pupils develop their social skills by taking on responsibilities, such as school councillors and eco-councillors. They also act as junior police community support officers (PCSO) with the local area PCSOs. This helps them understand how to be safe in the wider world. They share this important information with their peers.

Governors understand their responsibilities and are passionate about the work of the school. They visit school regularly and know what is going well and what needs to improve. This knowledge is used to support and ask important questions of leaders.

Staff report that they feel well supported by leaders. They know leaders care about their well-being and do all they can to manage their workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders prioritise safeguarding and know pupils well. Concerns get reported electronically. All staff take responsibility for this. Leaders act upon any concerns in a timely way. They show a real determination to involve external agencies if necessary, so all pupils are safe and can thrive.

Leaders provide comprehensive training for staff and governors. Relevant checks are in place to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children.

Pupils spoken to felt safe in school. They say bullying is very rare. If bullying did happen, pupils felt confident that staff would deal with it appropriately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not use assessment rigorously enough to check pupils have understood and remembered what they have learned in all subject areas. As a result of this, gaps in pupils' learning are not identified and persist. Leaders should ensure systems are in place to assess pupils' knowledge in all subject areas, and ensure all teachers adhere to these.
- Leaders do not make robust checks on the teaching of phonics for those pupils at the early stage of reading. Consequently, they have not identified the reasons for pupils not making as much progress as they should. Leaders should ensure teachers of early reading have training and feedback on how to teach phonics consistently well, so all pupils achieve to the best of their ability.

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 October 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	103268
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10256977
Type of school	Junior
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	534
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Amjid Ali
Headteacher	Cathy Grace
Website	www.thornton.bham.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	October 2017 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- This school was a primary school at its last inspection, with pupils on roll starting from age five. The school now has pupils on roll from age seven.
- This school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- This school does not make use of 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 held meetings with the headteacher and senior leaders. The inspector also met with the interim SENDCo.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, art and design and English. For each deep dive, the inspector 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 also looked at samples of pupils' work in a range of subjects, including geography, history and French.
- The inspector held a hybrid meeting with three governors, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector listened to a sample of pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons at different times of the day and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They spoke formally with groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils in lessons and around school.
- The inspector met with leaders about the school's safeguarding procedures. The inspector reviewed policies and records relating to safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and attendance. The inspector spoke to pupils and staff about pupils' safety.
- The inspector reviewed a wide range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans and information on the school's website.
- The inspector talked informally with pupils and staff to gather general information about school life. In addition, they took account of the responses to Ofsted's surveys of staff's, pupils' and parents' views.

Inspection team

Keri Baylis, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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