

Inspection of Thorney Close Primary School

Torquay Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR3 4BB

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 September 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Thorney Close Primary School is a place where pupils thrive. The school's motto, 'where learning blossoms', encompasses the school's belief that all pupils have a right to a high-quality education. The school ensures that opportunities apply equally to all pupils, irrespective of the barriers they may face in life.

Pupils feel happy and safe in school. They feel well supported by trusted adults who help them if they have any worries. Pupils are proud of their school. Their behaviour is exemplary. The school's three rules, 'be ready, be respectful and be safe', are followed by everyone. Pupils develop mutual respect for each other. Relationships are a strength of the school. Adults know pupils well and go the extra mile to make sure that their time in school is a memorable one. The school is rightly proud of the high-quality support it provides to pupils and their families.

Leaders' knowledge of the community and local area informs the design of the curriculum. Pupils are prepared for life beyond the school. They enjoy beach school, trips to local landmarks and theatre visits. They also have the opportunity to visit London. Such trips broaden their horizons.

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

Leaders have designed a curriculum that is ambitious and meets the needs of pupils. Leaders have carefully considered the knowledge that they want children to learn and remember. 'Memory joggers' help pupils to revisit important knowledge and recall their previous learning. Teachers present new learning clearly to pupils. Teachers check to see what pupils have remembered. They use the outcomes of these checks to adapt the next steps in their teaching. Pupils enjoy learning. They are keen to succeed and do well.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive effective support. Pupils who attend the provision for pupils with hearing impairments are fully integrated within the life of the school. These pupils access all educational experiences. Staff have regular training to help them understand how to adapt their teaching when necessary. They do so skilfully. As a result, pupils with SEND achieve well.

Early reading is given high priority at the school. The approach to teaching early reading is effective. Leaders have thought carefully about the phonic knowledge that pupils will acquire as they learn to read. Teachers ensure that the books pupils read match the sounds they know. This helps pupils to learn how to read fluently. Teachers make regular checks to ensure that pupils have learned and remembered the sounds they have been taught. Pupils who need extra support with reading receive the help they need from well-trained staff. Pupils are confident and keen to talk about the books they have read. Staff throughout the school choose high-quality texts to promote a love of reading.

Staff have the highest expectations of the pupils in their care. This starts with the youngest children in early years. Children learn how to follow routines. Relationships are a strength of the school. Interactions between pupils are respectful. They listen to each other and value each other's opinions. However, a number of pupils do not attend school regularly enough. While the school has some effective strategies to improve the attendance of individual pupils, too many pupils are absent from school on a regular basis. Leaders have recently evaluated and changed some of the strategies that they use to encourage pupils to attend school. However, it is too early to see the impact of this work.

The school has recently introduced a new provision for two-year-olds. Children in the early years settle well to school life. Staff have high expectations of children and model early language and communication well. However, in some areas, what children learn in the early years does not prepare them for what they will learn in some foundation subjects in key stage 1. This means that some children in the early years are not as well prepared for their next steps as they might be.

The school has created an inclusive environment in which difference is celebrated. The mental health and well-being of pupils are a priority of the school. Since the pandemic, initiatives such as yoga have been introduced to support pupils' mental health and physical development. A wide range of extra-curricular clubs develop pupils' talents and interests. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their participation in visits and trips that enhance the curriculum. Pupils learn about fundamental British values. These messages are integrated into personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, the wider curriculum and through the daily life of the school.

Leaders make a positive difference to the lives of the pupils in their care. Governors know the school well. They are visible and hold leaders to account. Staff members feel well supported. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and well-being. Staff appreciate leaders' open-door policy and the school culture of collaborative working. Continuous professional development is well planned and supports teachers to improve their practice. Most parents feel well supported and would recommend the school to others. One, who represented the views of many, described it as 'a lovely school, which feels like a community.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some areas of learning, the school is still to consider how the early years curriculum best equips children for what they will learn in some foundation subjects in key stage 1. Some children are not as prepared as they might be for their next steps. The school should ensure that the links between the early years

and key stage 1 curriculums are better aligned to further enhance pupils' learning as they progress through the school.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108828
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10289989
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	263
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Lorraine Scott
Headteacher	Catherine Jones
Website	www.thorneycloseprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	5 July 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- There is an on-site nursery, which has recently introduced provision for two-year-olds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is above the national average.
- The school has a resource unit for pupils with a hearing impairment.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in reading, mathematics, science, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also spoke to leaders and looked at curriculum plans and online evidence for PSHE.
- Inspectors held a meeting with the headteacher and school business manager to discuss attendance and behaviour in school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils.
- The lead inspector spoke to five members of the local governing board, including the chair of the local governing board and a school improvement partner from the local authority. Inspectors also looked at minutes of meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors observed breaktimes.
- Inspectors also visited daily story time.
- Inspectors spoke with an early career teacher and their mentor.
- Inspectors spoke to a group of parents at the start and the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Kate Longstaff, lead inspector

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