

# Inspection of a good school: Thorley Hill Primary School

Park Lane, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 3NH

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Inspection dates:

26 and 27 March 2024

## Outcome

Thorley Hill Primary School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Thorley Hill are polite and confident. In lessons, they keenly follow well-established routines. They enjoy learning and concentrate hard. At playtimes, pupils play happily together in the well-equipped outdoor space. In assemblies, they learn about values and celebrate achievements. Pupils live up to the school motto of 'respect, believe, achieve' and strive to become a 'Brilliant Blue' in recognition of their successes.

Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. They know how to use the 'Worry Monster' to alert staff quickly if they have any concerns. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the support that they need to take part in the same activities as their peers.

The school offers all pupils a wide variety of experiences that enrich learning. Pupils enjoy visiting Hampton Court to learn about life in Tudor England, and trips to places of worship, including a church, a mosque and a gurdwara. There are many opportunities to take part in sporting competitions and join clubs. Older pupils look forward to going on their residential visit where they engage in outdoor and adventurous activities. Many pupils eagerly take on responsibilities, such as librarians, house captains and play leaders.

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

The school has planned an ambitious curriculum. Staff have thought carefully about the knowledge they want pupils to learn. Content is carefully considered so pupils build on what they already know. Lessons include time to 'review, revisit and remember' previous learning. This successfully deepens pupils' understanding and helps them achieve extremely well across the curriculum.

Staff have secure subject knowledge. Teachers provide pupils with clear explanations. In mathematics, they plan lessons making consistent use of opportunities for pupils to

'explore', 'practice' and 'challenge' themselves. This structure helps pupils learn knowledge securely and develop strong fluency and reasoning skills. Teachers ensure that pupils learn subject-specific vocabulary so they can understand and discuss their learning. Pupils in Year 2, for example, deepen their knowledge of division using precise terms such as quotient, dividend and divisor.

Reading is given a high priority across the full curriculum. Children in Nursery and Reception quickly learn to recognise and blend sounds. Staff check pupils' reading thoroughly and often. Pupils practise reading from books that match their stage of reading. Pupils love reading and they achieve well. Pupils read from carefully selected texts, including stories, poems and non-fiction. In the early years, staff expertly ensure that children develop the full range of skills needed for key stage 1. Older pupils enthusiastically talk about books they have read and how they enjoy visiting their well-resourced library.

Staff quickly and accurately identify when pupils need extra support. They adapt activities well, ensuring that all pupils, including those with SEND, successfully access the same high-quality curriculum as their peers.

The school has updated some aspects of the curriculum recently so that knowledge builds step by step and is more closely tailored to pupils' needs. These new plans focus sharply on the precise information staff want pupils to know. A few of these areas are very new. While gaps in some pupils' knowledge remain, the updated curriculum is helping to remedy this.

The school is very calm and orderly. Pupils behave extremely well in lessons and around school. Attendance is high. When incidents of poor behaviour occasionally happen, staff help pupils reflect on their actions and control their emotions. Pupils trust staff to resolve situations quickly and fairly.

There is a carefully considered curriculum for personal, social and health education. Opportunities for pupils' emotional growth and personal development are extensive. 'Wellbeing Wednesdays' enrich pupils' knowledge about self-care, looking after each other and learning to be good citizens. Pupils are taught first aid, explore diversity and learn about life in modern Britain. Enterprise week teaches vital skills about money and entrepreneurship. Pupils are extremely well prepared for their next stages in education and beyond.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They describe being well supported to manage their workload. They enjoy opportunities to develop their expertise. They say leaders are always available with advice and encouragement.

Governors make a strong contribution to school improvement. They know the school well and offer effective strategic leadership, supporting the school to develop and flourish.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has recently developed some areas of the curriculum to make sure that the content meets the needs of all pupils and builds on what they have learned before. Some of this work is new and not firmly embedded. There remain some gaps in pupils' knowledge in areas of the curriculum. The school needs to make sure that the new curriculum plans are implemented effectively so that pupils are building secure knowledge and skills to achieve consistently well in all areas of the curriculum.

## 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 April 2014.

## 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 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117230
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10323640
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	237
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Ros Brown
<b>Headteacher</b>	Diana Gunn
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thorleyhill.herts.sch.uk">www.thorleyhill.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	19 September 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

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 this evaluation of the school.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector 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. The inspector listened to some pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspector also discussed the curriculum with leaders, and sampled pupils' work in several other subjects.

- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspector met with members of the governing body, including the chair of governors.
- The inspector met with the local authority's school effectiveness adviser.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector 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.
- The inspector took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governing body minutes and reports and reports from the local authority.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around the school and discussed behaviour with pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspector considered the views of parents through responses to Ofsted Parent View. The inspector also gathered the views of pupils and staff through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

### **Inspection team**

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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