

Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School

Buttsgrove Way, Huntingdon, PE29 1PE

Inspection dates 22–23 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders direct the school's work very well. They have successfully tackled previous weaknesses in teaching, learning and leadership.
- Pupils' attainment has risen across the school and is now average in Year 6. Pupils make good progress and achieve well.
- Teaching has improved. Nearly all teaching is good and some lessons have elements that are outstanding.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils know they are valued and appreciate the support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils are very friendly and considerate, and feel very happy and safe in school. Their behaviour and attitudes to learning are rarely less than good, and this makes a considerable contribution to the productive learning environment.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always ensure that pupils respond to the marking of their work.
- In a small number of lessons some pupils, particularly the most able, are not challenged enough with harder work.
- The school has not taken sufficient steps to improve pupils' attendance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 19 lessons or parts of lessons, taught by 16 teachers and/or teaching assistants. Four of these lessons were seen together with the headteacher and assistant headteachers. Samples of pupils' written work were analysed. An inspector listened to some Reception and Year 2 pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with school staff, two groups of pupils, governors and an adviser for school improvement from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 35 questionnaires completed by staff. They also spoke to several parents informally at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors looked at a range of evidence including: the work in pupils' books; monitoring records; the school's own data on pupils' progress; records of governing body meetings; and policies, procedures and records relating to safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

David Herd, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Susan Wood

Additional Inspector

Yvonne Watts

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thongsley Fields is larger than the average primary school, and the number of pupils is increasing.
- The majority of pupils are White British but increasing proportions are from other ethnic groups who arrive at the school speaking little or no English.
- An above-average proportion of pupils are supported by the 'pupil premium', which provides extra funding to help certain groups. In this school it applies to children in local authority care, children from service families and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action, and at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- A daily breakfast club, supplied and managed by the school, operates on the school site.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' learning and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding and further raise attainment, especially for more-able pupils, by:
 - allowing pupils enough time to respond to teachers' marking and other guidance they receive
 - always challenging more-able pupils by regularly setting work that will stretch them to do their best
 - taking steps to improve pupils' attendance, so that all pupils have every opportunity to learn and make the best possible progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children enter Nursery and Reception with levels of skills and knowledge well below those typically seen for their age, particularly in language and communication. They make good progress as a result of interesting and well-planned teaching.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been well below average in reading, writing and mathematics. It has been rising this year and is now broadly average in all three subject areas.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 improved to average levels in English and mathematics in 2012, and this has been sustained. Boys and girls achieve equally well. However, the proportion of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels is below that found nationally, indicating that more-able pupils are not always reaching the levels they are capable of.
- The good progress now made in Key Stages 1 and 2, and sometimes particularly rapid progress in reading and writing, stems from improvements in teaching.
- Pupils who arrive at the school speaking little or no English make rapid progress to become confident in their speaking and listening skills. They learn how to read and write and apply these skills in other aspects of their learning.
- The 2012 Year 6 national test results showed that on average, pupils supported by the pupil premium were a term ahead of their counterparts across the country in English, and slightly less but still ahead in mathematics. They were three and a half terms behind their classmates in English and a term and a half in mathematics, but given their starting points this still reflects good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make good progress because support is well directed by the teachers, or teaching assistants in small-group work, to meet their needs.
- By the end of Year 2 most pupils have acquired a secure grounding in phonics (the sounds that letters make). Less-able pupils know the correct method for sounding out tricky words and most read them accurately.

The quality of teaching is good

- Nearly all of the teaching seen was good, in keeping with the school's records, and lessons for both older and younger pupils are mostly interesting. Typical features include careful planning and matching of work to pupils' abilities, skilful questioning to check pupils' understanding, high expectations for pupils' progress, and stimulating methods of presentation. In these highly enjoyable lessons pupils are fully involved and work at a fast pace.
- Throughout the school teachers plan lessons purposefully by taking close account of pupils' previous levels of work and prior learning. In Reception, staff carefully record children's achievements to decide what they need to learn next.
- Teachers practise new ideas and methods carefully with all pupils so that they know clearly what they are expected to do in their independent work.

- Pupils who arrive at the school speaking little or no English benefit from well-chosen support. Teachers and teaching assistants find out what pupils already know and then design precise programmes to help them to learn the skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing and then apply them in other areas of their learning.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils very well. This means that, for example, pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium get the support they need to make the same good progress as other pupils in the school. This helps to ensure that the school is successful in promoting equal opportunities for all its pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well. This was shown in one lesson where skilful questioning helped pupils add on two-digit numbers in a 'race to 200.' In another lesson a teacher supported pupils in learning the sounds that letters make and then, after checking that their words were correctly spelt, writing interesting sentences.
- Teachers' careful and consistent use of praise promotes pupils' self-esteem, encourages them to work enthusiastically and complete tasks quickly, and keeps them fully focused on their learning. Pupils understand the importance of listening carefully so that very little time is wasted.
- Teaching makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils enjoy exploring different religious faiths, as was evident in displays celebrating learning in Hinduism and Buddhism.
- While teaching is usually well matched to pupils' different abilities, there are occasions when all pupils do the same tasks, which means more-able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently by appropriately demanding work. In the few instances where teaching is less than good, this is due to relative weaknesses in planning and lower expectations holding back the pace of learning.
- Teachers generally use pupils' targets well in lessons to support their learning and mark pupils' work regularly, noting what they have done well and showing them what needs to be improved. However, pupils are not given enough opportunities to respond to teachers' marking and so make even better progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The youngest children settle quickly into Reception because staff are very patient and caring, and additional staff are used very effectively to support children who need extra help. They readily develop good relationships with each other, participate confidently in classroom activities and concentrate well, and work independently and safely both indoors and outdoors.
- A large proportion of the pupils attend the free breakfast club each morning. This helps them to improve their attendance, develop social skills and get a good start to the school day. In addition, 'Sensory Circuits' help the pupils gain confidence and improve their motor skills, making sure they are ready to learn.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is almost always good because they are well motivated by the good teaching provided. On a very few occasions the usually high standard of behaviour drops when some pupils are not challenged enough in their work, but even then they do not disrupt other pupils' learning.
- Pupils are very happy and are proud of their school. They are very polite and welcoming towards

visitors. They are confident and very friendly to each other. Boys and girls mix well with each other, both in lessons and during play.

- Pupils feel very safe, both in the playground and indoors. They understand well how to stay safe in other potentially dangerous situations such as near busy roads or when using the internet.
- Pupils say that bullying hardly ever happens, and any that does is dealt with immediately. The school's records show very few recent racist incidents, cyber-bullying or discriminatory comments. Few pupils have been excluded.
- The school encourages good behaviour and pupils' understanding of right and wrong very effectively through, for example, enjoyable assemblies. Teachers and teaching assistants also have high expectations for pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand the school's systems to promote good behaviour and the sanctions that are used if their behaviour drops below the expected standard.
- Case studies show that the school's work with individual pupils, for example through play therapy, one-to-one tuition and/or counselling, supports their social and academic development well. The school works very effectively with external agencies such as therapists and family workers in the event that it has any concerns about children's welfare or other barriers to learning.
- In recent years, pupils' attendance has been below average. The school has worked hard to improve attendance and has recently developed strategies that are beginning to have an impact on particular groups of pupils. However, the attendance of some pupils has not improved sufficiently so the school still needs to ensure that all pupils attend regularly. When pupils do attend, they almost always arrive on time.

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have been especially successful in tackling the key issues from the previous inspection. The school has reviewed the teaching of writing so that skills taught are practised in other subjects. Marking now regularly gives pupils development points, and subject leaders are trained and more experienced in their monitoring role.
- Leaders keep careful checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress, and have worked purposefully to improve both, through, for example, the 'teaching development programme.' They are ambitious for pupils' achievement and constantly seek out new ways to raise it further.
- Pupil premium funding is spent effectively and used specifically to redirect the work of teachers and teaching assistants for one-to-one support and small group work, to help any of these pupils who are at risk of falling behind. This has generally helped these pupils to narrow the gap with their classmates.
- The school benefits from dedicated staff. Their pay rises and promotion are clearly linked to the quality of teaching and the management responsibilities of individual staff. Swift action is taken to tackle underperformance. Staff targets are linked closely to the priorities sharply outlined in the school development plan and their individual responsibilities for ensuring pupils' progress.
- Senior leaders understand how to promote pupils' good progress and all play a full and effective role in checking the impact of the teachers' work. There have been opportunities for teachers to observe the good practice of their colleagues. They now need to make sure that pupils respond

to their marking.

- The local authority has provided timely and very effective support to tackle the main weaknesses identified at the last inspection. As the school has shown it is increasingly able to direct its own improvement, the local authority's role has been reduced to 'light-touch' monitoring.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governors have been well trained in their responsibilities and know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. They hold senior leaders to account and use thorough systems to make sure the school links staff pay rises and promotion to their performance. Governors maintain an overview of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement through reviewing data on pupils' performance and receiving reports from senior staff. They have accurately evaluated the impact of external support and the school's use of the additional funding for specific groups of pupils, including those known to be eligible for the pupil premium, and know how this money is being spent. They are fully involved in checking how well the school improvement plan is being implemented and understand how well the school is doing compared to similar schools. They have very recently established a new 'school improvement' committee to help them check on progress and development. They make sure that all national requirements for safeguarding are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133699
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	406546

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	338
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	June Housego
Headteacher	Rachel Myer
Date of previous school inspection	28 March 2011
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