

Thorpe Primary School

Atherstone Avenue, Netherton, Peterborough, PE3 9UG

Inspection dates 20–21 June 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The strong leadership and management of the headteacher and governors have successfully maintained pupils' education at a good level.
- Children get a good start to their education in the nursery and reception classes.
- Having started school with skills and understanding well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in communication, pupils of all abilities make good progress and standards in English and mathematics are average and rising by the time they leave.
- High-quality relationships and a rich and varied range of activities foster pupils' enjoyment of learning. The school develops their personal and social skills particularly well.
- Teaching is mostly good and occasionally outstanding. Teachers promote learning well and demonstrate good subject knowledge.
- Regular checks on the quality of teaching, followed by effective staff training, ensure that staff are able to continually improve their skills.
- Teaching assistants give very effective support, using resources and activities well to interest pupils.
- Attendance has improved over the last two years and is now above average.
- Pupils' behaviour and safety are outstanding. Excellent attitudes to learning are evident in all lessons.
- The school's leaders and governors have a clear view of how well it is doing and where it needs to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- A small amount of teaching requires improvement and not enough is outstanding across the school to ensure that all pupils are making rapid and sustained progress.
- Lesson activities are not always planned sufficiently well to challenge all of the pupils.
- Although standards in reading are improving, too few pupils reach the higher levels.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors held meetings with staff, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority who supports the school’s improvement.
- They looked at a range of evidence, including the school’s own judgements on its performance, information about current pupils’ progress, records of the monitoring of teaching, the work pupils were doing in their books and the school’s documentation regarding safeguarding.
- Teaching and learning were observed in 24 lessons or part lessons, across all year groups. Sixteen teachers were observed teaching.
- Inspectors took account of the 20 responses from parents to Ofsted’s online questionnaire (Parent View) and the school’s own survey, as well as speaking with parents during the inspection.
- Inspectors analysed the 46 questionnaires completed by school staff.
- Two new teachers, including a newly qualified teacher, were appointed in September 2012. Subject leader and other leadership responsibilities have been re-allocated this year.

Inspection team

Susan Thomas-Pounce, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Vreta Bagilhole	Additional Inspector
Robert Bone	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This primary school is well above average in size.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, with Pakistani pupils representing the largest group in the school. The number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which in this school provides additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching so more pupils make rapid progress, by:
 - making full use of the information gathered on attainment and progress to match work in lessons more precisely to pupils' individual ability levels
 - giving the most able pupils more demanding work, so they reach the higher National Curriculum levels in reading.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children enter the nursery with skills that are significantly below the levels expected for their age. They settle quickly and achieve well. Not all children who join the school in the reception class have benefited from nursery education. They also start with skills and knowledge well below expectations, and many speak little or no English. Children make good progress in all areas of learning across both age groups.
- All children in the nursery and reception classes and pupils in Key Stage 1, regardless of ability or special need, make good progress in developing an understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) to support their reading and writing, as well as the mathematical skills they need to complete simple calculations. The development of personal and social skills is a particular strength of the school.
- Achievement across the school is good and continues to improve. Detailed and reliable school data show that standards are rising, and good teaching leads to pupils making good progress throughout the school. Writing and mathematics are improving strongly. However, not enough pupils make consistently rapid progress, especially in reading, for progress to be outstanding.
- In the last national check on Year 1 pupils' phonic ability, pupils performed well below what is typically found nationally. The school has responded well to this and current data confirm that performance in Year 1 is now nearer to national expectations.
- Reading is taught through daily phonics and guided reading activities in all age groups. Teachers check that pupils are reading regularly at home and at school, and hear pupils read if it has not been possible at home. Consequently, reading is improving, although not at the same rate as writing and mathematical development. Most pupils make good gains in their learning to read accurately and fluently by the time they leave, but the most able readers are not always fully challenged to reach the levels they are capable of.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets and considerable gains in their confidence and skills. Good support is provided by class teachers, teaching assistants and external professionals such as therapists.
- The pupil premium effectively supports the learning of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals through one-to-one tuition and additional sessions in English and mathematics, and the school has appointed a senior member of staff to make sure support is well matched to individual needs. The 2012 national test results for Year 6 show that the average attainment of these pupils was a term and a half behind their classmates in English and two terms behind in mathematics, but they made the same good progress as other pupils in the school.
- Good achievement for all groups demonstrates the success of the school's promotion of equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching is improving in response to good use of the wide range of training opportunities offered to staff. It is mostly good, with a growing proportion that is outstanding.
- High-quality relationships make a strong impact on pupils' exemplary attitudes to learning.

Teachers plan tasks that motivate children and ask questions that challenge pupils to think for themselves. Frequent marking of pupils' work typically gives them clear guidance about how well they have met the learning objective and how they can further improve their work.

- Teachers use information and communication technology confidently and effectively to maintain pupils' interest and stimulate their imagination. Pupils especially enjoy their lessons when they are practical and enable them to use their own ideas to complete a task. In a Year 6 lesson linking mathematics to a real-life healthy eating project, pupils were able to see how the work could relate to their own lives. In a Year 5 lesson pupils were inspired to write a diary to record their feelings and ideas following a lively drama lesson.
- Teachers' strategies to manage pupils' behaviour are very effective, with the result that lessons observed were purposeful with plenty of opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills. Pupils were seen to be concentrating on their work and working hard without constant adult intervention.
- The school uses a range of measures to support any pupils who are identified as being in danger of falling behind in their work, or whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Effective support is given to those who need it, and teachers and teaching assistants work closely together to make sure it is working well.
- In the nursery and reception classes, there is a good balance of adult-led and child-chosen activities. Children enjoy being able to follow their own interests, subtly influenced by the range of equipment made available. Great excitement was seen as the children sang about the 'wriggling and tickling of the spider' from the story of *The old woman who swallowed a fly*.
- The tracking of pupils' learning is rigorous and regular meetings between senior leaders and teachers highlight individual pupils' needs well. In a few instances, teaching requires improvement because teachers do not take sufficient account of the information they hold about what pupils already know and can do when planning lessons to move them rapidly to the higher levels.
- The strengths in teaching far outweigh the less effective parts. Teachers generally convey high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Mostly, they set tasks that are well matched to individual pupils' needs and abilities. However, the more-able pupils are not always given work that is challenging enough to enable them to reach the higher levels in reading.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are exemplary. They develop very positive attitudes to life and learning through the teaching of common values and expectations. The school strongly promotes regular attendance and punctuality, and attendance is now above average. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspection.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They move around the school with care and consideration for others. Consequently, the school is calm, friendly and very orderly. Pupils listen very attentively to teachers and their classmates, and support each other's learning very well.
- Inspectors visited a range of different intervention groups, lessons, assemblies and break and lunchtime activities. They found high quality relationships and very positive views of the school from all pupils.

- Pupils value the 'problem boxes', which are easily accessible throughout the school. They find it a very helpful way to support the agreed expectations of behaviour. Pupils have an excellent understanding of different types of bullying and say they are sure that very little goes on. Parents are very happy with the school's timely response to any concerns they raise.
- The school's detailed analysis of incidents shows very few instances of poor behaviour. Most were minor issues that were dealt with effectively and closely followed-up.
- Year 6 pupils feel they are very well prepared for the challenges they may meet in their future life, through well planned personal and social education and exciting residential visits which promote their self-awareness and self-confidence.
- Pupils take their many responsibilities around the school very seriously. They fulfil their roles on the school council very well and make a positive impact on the life of the school.
- Parents, staff and pupils all agree that behaviour is exemplary and that the school is a very safe place in which to learn, grow and develop.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong leadership and inspires the staff and pupils. He is held in high regard by the school community. The school's view of its own performance is very accurate. Senior leaders have a detailed knowledge of its strengths and areas for improvement.
- Staff morale is high and the staff questionnaires show that staff are very proud to be working at the school. They work very effectively together and regularly take advantage of training to enhance their work. Arrangements for checking on the quality of teaching are thorough. Accurate and regular assessments of pupils' performance give teachers the information they need to fulfil their responsibilities in raising pupils' achievement further.
- The procedures used to analyse and measure pupils' progress are good, and the results are used effectively by senior leaders and the governing body to set targets for improvement. Pupil premium funding is used well, and the progress of eligible pupils is rigorously tracked. Appropriate support is provided to ensure they achieve as well as other pupils, and any gaps in the performance, confidence and self-esteem of these pupils compared with other groups are small.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a wide-ranging and interesting range of taught subjects which has an outstanding impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Music, art and sport are important features of school life and provide pupils with stimulating activities. Visits and visitors to the school, together with the very strong and active links with a school in South Africa, widen pupils' view of the world.
- The school works extremely well with vulnerable pupils and their parents and carers. It organises sessions for parents to help them support the learning needs of their children.
- Currently, the local authority only provides 'light touch' leadership support, if requested.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very good understanding of the school's performance. They gather, check and discuss a wide range of reports, as well as visiting regularly to see for themselves how the school is operating and performing. They challenge senior leaders to improve their school.

They oversee the arrangements for relating teachers' pay to their performance, and play a full part in evaluating the overall effectiveness of the quality of education provided. All decisions on spending are closely linked to school development priorities, and value for money is high on the agenda. Governors understand data and how well pupils do and have made good decisions over the spending of the pupil premium funding, including the recent appointment of a member of staff to lead this area. They meet their duty to keep pupils safe, for example by ensuring that staff and governors are trained appropriately in child protection and that safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements. The governors bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the development of the school; they are a go-ahead and well-informed group.

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	110774
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	412136

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	472
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Hammond
Headteacher	Nick Guest
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2010
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