

# Thornton Primary School

Thornton Road, Ward End, Birmingham, B8 2LQ

**Inspection dates** 2–3 April 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
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.

- The school has responded quickly to the dip in progress and standards in 2013. Pupils across the school are once again making good progress.
- The school is responding well to changes in the pupil profile, with greater numbers of pupils with little or no English joining during the school year.
- Teaching is good and in some year groups it is outstanding, so pupils make good or better progress from year to year.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good and often excellent. Pupils show outstanding attitudes and courtesy towards each other and to adults.
- Pupils enjoy school and are extremely well looked after.
- Attendance is well above average year-on-year. Pupils arrive to school punctually.
- Strong and determined leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by senior leaders, has been crucial to the rapid improvement during the last year.
- Leadership roles are well defined and leaders at all levels contribute effectively to improving the school.
- School leaders regularly carry out detailed checks on the quality of teaching. High expectations of staff have ensured teaching plays an important role in improving pupils' progress.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is still some teaching that requires improvement.
- Pupils are occasionally not confident in starting their work when it is too difficult and when there are not enough adults to help them.
- Marking of pupils' work is not consistently helpful to pupils in improving their work.
- Leaders are not using their checks on pupils' work with enough focus on how much progress pupils are making.
- Governors support school leadership well but are not asking appropriate, searching questions to challenge school leaders on how much progress pupils are making.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 26 lessons. All lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher or a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors heard pupils read and looked at the work in their books.
- Meetings were held with governors, the senior leadership team, subject leaders, and pupils. An inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school's own judgements on its strengths and weaknesses, and the data it collects on pupils' progress. Documents detailing the school's arrangements for safeguarding were reviewed.
- Questionnaire responses from 15 members of staff were analysed.
- There were insufficient responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, for them to be published. An inspector spoke to parents at the beginning of the school day.

## Inspection team

David Speakman, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Neil Harvey	Additional Inspector
Lynn Stanbridge	Additional Inspector
Helen Jones	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The school is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest group is Pakistani.
- The large majority of pupils speak English as an additional language, and a significant number are at an early stage of learning English.
- An above average proportion of pupils is supported by the pupil premium. In this school, the additional funding is for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is about average.
- Last year the school did not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has one mixed-ability form in the Reception Year and in Years 1 and 2. The school increases to five form entry at Year 3. There are currently five forms in Years 3, 5 and 6 and six classes in Year 4. Pupils are placed in classes according to their ability in Literacy. Pupils are grouped separately for mathematics.
- A much greater than average proportion of pupils join the school during the school year, particularly in Key Stage 2 where the school has experienced most growth. Most new pupils speak little or no English.

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

- Make sure that the quality of teaching and learning is at least good in all classes by:
  - improving the marking of pupils' work so that it consistently informs them how to improve
  - making sure that there is enough adult support in classes where there is a high proportion of pupils with special educational needs.
- Improve the checking of pupils' progress by:
  - making sure that subject leaders in English and mathematics, key stage or phase leaders, and those at a senior leadership level are fully familiar with different ways of measuring pupils' progress to get a clear idea of pupils' achievement and how well the school is doing
  - making sure that governors ask searching questions of school leaders about how pupils are doing.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the Reception Year with knowledge and understanding typical for their age but in speaking, their attainment is lower. They make good progress and by the time they transfer into Year 1, most achieve a good level of development.
- Over the past three years, standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 have been rising. Most recent end of key stage assessments show attainment in reading and mathematics is broadly average and in writing, well above the national average. Overall, attainment is above average and achievement at Key Stage 1 is good.
- Pupils build well on the good start they get in learning to read. The results in the phonics (the sounds letters make) check in Year 1 compare well to the national percentages of pupils reaching the expected standard. Key Stage 1 readers use a range of strategies to read unfamiliar words and read at levels appropriate for their age, and sometimes higher.
- Since the school was previously inspected, standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 have been above average until 2013 and pupils' achievement has been good.
- In 2013, results of the end of Key Stage 2 tests fell to below average. In 2012, the school was accused of malpractice in the administration of the writing tests. The allegations were unproved and results, showing above average attainment and good achievement, were published late. These allegations had a considerable and negative impact on the staff, whose professional integrity was under question.
- Because a high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language, they were taught to write in a specific style, all pupils using the same guidance. This was effective. In 2010 an HMI led literacy focused inspection recommended the school 'extends the Key Stage 2 outstanding practice in teaching literacy into Key Stage 1 and Early Years Foundation Stage.' The school made a decision to alter the way it taught literacy in order to avoid further accusations. Combined with a high level of staff change in upper Key Stage 2, this led to attainment and progress dipping in 2013.
- Following the poor results, the school reverted to the previous successful teaching of literacy. Pupils are once again making good progress. Because of the increasing numbers of pupils who speak little or no English now joining the school during Key Stage 2, attainment is lower than before but is still broadly average starting from lower levels of attainment.
- Current Year 6 pupils are making good progress. Attainment in reading is above average and in writing and mathematics, average. However, pupils have made more progress in reading, writing and mathematics than is nationally expected. There is a similar picture in Year 5, with broadly average attainment and good progress.
- Scrutiny of pupils' books and lesson observations show that pupils at all levels of attainment are making at least good progress and some are making exceptional progress. Using assessment data, the school cannot demonstrate how well pupils joining the school during Key Stage 2 are doing, but the progress seen in their books is good.
- More-able pupils are making exceptional progress. In Year 3 pupils are already editing and rewriting their writing to improve it. In mathematics they rapidly learn about coordinates to a

level well beyond the levels expected for their age.

- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress through effective and targeted support from teaching assistants and teachers.
- Over the last two years, pupils supported by the pupil premium made similar progress as others in reading, writing and mathematics and the levels of attainment were similar for the two groups.

## **The quality of teaching** is good

- Teaching in the Reception class is good. Adults enable the children to explore and investigate. Teachers know the children well, they know exactly when to intervene, ask challenging questions and keep children focused. Children's learning journals show a good range of activities are provided for children to learn equally well inside and out of doors.
- Lesson observations, the school's information on pupils' progress, pupils' work books and records of the school's own checks on teaching confirm that teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2 is once again good and enables pupils to make good progress over time.
- Pupils are grouped by their ability in literacy for most lessons, and by their mathematical ability for mathematics. This organisation means that teachers are able to provide tasks that challenge pupils at an appropriate level. Teachers still provide work that is matched closely to different abilities in each class so that pupils are set work at the right level.
- Pupils are encouraged to follow their own ideas and to think for themselves. Consequently, they show high levels of interest in their work and do their very best. Pupils in Year 6 used a range of strategies to solve problems in mathematics. In Year 3, pupils were given advice on how to improve their writing, and encouraged to improve their work using whichever writing style they chose. These are typical of the skilled way in which teachers use ideas that come from the pupils to engage them and make learning effective.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well. They have good relationships with pupils and make their high expectations of behaviour clear. They praise pupils' achievements when deserved and quietly remind pupils to listen carefully on the rare occasions they are not.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are taught well outside class in small groups and through one-to-one support from the very earliest age. The support given is tailored to meet the specific needs of pupils and is often provided in specialist areas that are set up to support pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.
- The grouping of pupils according to language skills means that in some classes, where there are more pupils with special educational needs, pupils require more adult support and intervention in class. On occasions, there are too few adults to give the level of support needed and some pupils struggle with the work.
- The work of pupils known to be eligible for pupil-premium funding is carefully checked. They are supported effectively through well-considered and planned one-to-one or small-group teaching programmes to help them catch up.
- Pupils' work is mostly marked well and helps them understand how they can improve it. There

are examples of marking that are very effective. Teachers point out what pupils have done well and identify a key point for improvement. However, this is not consistent across all classes.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Their attitudes towards staff and each other are outstanding. Courtesy, excellent manners and positive attitudes ensure there is a calm and welcoming atmosphere throughout the school. As a result, pupils enjoy coming to school and join in all activities enthusiastically. Attendance is consistently above average.
- Pupils speak well about behaviour. They fully understand the systems to manage behaviour and respond exceptionally well. They say lessons are very rarely interrupted by poor behaviour. Pupils of all ages and abilities have positive attitudes to learning. They are keen to do their best and they sustain concentration. Pupils mostly carry on working without the direct supervision of an adult so class teachers and teaching assistants can work with groups of children without being interrupted. On the odd occasion when they have to wait for instructions from a teacher, pupils can become unsettled.
- Pupils show pride in their work. They work hard in lessons to present their work tidily. They respond thoughtfully to the teachers' comments about how to improve their work, taking care not to repeat any mistakes. Very little work remains incomplete.
- Pupils' behaviour is not yet outstanding because although some pupils attempt new work with confidence, with a determination to do their very best and try out new ideas and approaches to learning for themselves, some rely heavily on teachers for guidance. They lack confidence to take the next steps for themselves.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of bullying and are fully aware of issues relating to e-safety. They know how they would deal with any issues that worry them. They are adamant that if any bullying did arise, it would be dealt with immediately. Pupils say they are very safe in school.
- Pupils are very well looked after in the breakfast and after-school clubs. There is a good range of activities for them and in the mornings, they are given a healthy breakfast to set them up for the school day.

### **The leadership and management** are good

- Strong and determined leadership by the headteacher, ably supported by the senior leadership team, has quickly turned the school around since 2013, when attainment and progress at Key Stage 2 fell. They have high expectations of the work of the staff and their checking on the quality of teaching and learning is good. As a result senior leaders have secured rapid improvement in all key areas of the school's work during the last year.
- School leaders have tackled the areas for improvement identified in the school's last inspection. Standards are rising at Key Stage 1 and there is strong evidence now that children in the Reception Year learn effectively through play.
- Senior leaders monitor teaching regularly and have an accurate view of the strengths in teaching and the areas that need improving. All staff have challenging targets which link to the school's priorities for improvement and which are used to help assess the quality of their teaching.

Leadership ensures that the school's evaluation of teaching is linked to salary progression.

- The curriculum is carefully planned to engage pupils' interest. The curriculum makes good links between subjects so learning is meaningful and enhanced by a programme of interesting and relevant visits. There is appropriate emphasis on reading, writing and mathematics so pupils make good progress in developing these skills. Pupils who speak English as an additional language are helped to acquire enough English to access the full curriculum and ensure equality of opportunity.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils have a wide range of cultural and multicultural experiences through visits, visitors, celebrating a range of festivals, and through lessons. School assemblies are used well to raise pupils' spiritual awareness. Moral development is very good and reflected in pupils' behaviour. Pupils have good opportunities to develop their social awareness through considering others, valuing their own and others' achievements and through the house system. The school council contributes to decision making and the Eco Council explores ways to make the school environmentally friendly.
- Finances are managed well. Pupil premium funding is helping improve the progress of eligible pupils and enabling them catch up through one-to-one and small-group learning support. Good quality learning resources are provided and eligible pupils are supported in joining in clubs and trips.
- The school has made arrangements to spend the primary sports funds on improving and widening opportunities for pupils to take part in sports activities, improving teachers' expertise in teaching physical education and providing resources to enrich learning. They are planning to provide extra swimming lessons to ensure all pupils can swim by the time they leave the school. The impact of the allocation of these funds is effective because provision is better and helping to improve pupils' health.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the overall effectiveness of the school. Because the school has a track record of being a good school, the local authority did not intervene in the past. However, they did identify the school as being vulnerable after the 2013 end of Key Stage 2 test results. Support was offered, but school leaders declined.
- In the past, checking the school's effectiveness focused on the high standards pupils achieved. The changing pupil profile, with more limited English language skills, means that checking progress of all the different pupil groups is now the clearest indicator of effectiveness. Class teachers and subject leaders have an accurate knowledge of the standards pupils are reaching, but school leaders' view on progress and how well different groups are doing is less clear.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors are committed to the school's success and have questioned leaders about pupils' recent performance. Nonetheless, they do not have much experience of measuring the school's effectiveness using progress data and have not been in a position to ask sufficiently probing questions about this. Some governors have recently joined. They are aware that training is not up to date; particularly in understanding assessment data, and that this needs to be tackled. Through headteacher's reports, governors spoken to know the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
  - Governors make sure that national requirements are met, including those for safeguarding and procedures for vetting staff and visitors. They ensure that the school site is safe and secure.
  - Governors set suitable targets for managing the performance of the headteacher and staff. They have an adequate idea of how well staff are carrying out their responsibilities through this process. They are up to date in linking teachers' pay increases to the progress of pupils.

- Governors manage finances well. They are familiar with how the pupil premium funding is used. They manage the primary sports funding to good effect. Governors have been fully involved in monitoring major building projects completed since the previous inspection.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	103268
<b>Local authority</b>	Birmingham
<b>Inspection number</b>	439663

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	724
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Derek Cowley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Linda Webster
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	23 September 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 327 0824
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