

St John's CE (Thornham) Primary School

Thornham Lane, Middleton, Manchester, M24 2SB

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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.

- Pupils of all abilities achieve well. Overall standards in mathematics, reading and writing are above average by the end of Key Stage 2.
- Many more pupils than average make good progress in reading and mathematics.
- Teaching is good. Staff provide pupils with interesting activities that motivate them to make good progress.
- Pupils are keen to succeed and respond well to the increasingly high expectations asked of them. They work together well and are keen to discuss and help each other in lessons.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents overwhelmingly agree this is so. They behave well. They are courteous, polite and helpful towards adults and one another. This epitomises the school's motto, 'St John's Thornham, a small school with a big heart.'
- Despite a number staff changes since the last inspection, the senior leadership team have managed teaching and learning well and have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and in pupils' progress. This demonstrates the school is well placed to continue to move forward.
- The headteacher, together with the deputy headteachers, have a resolute focus on ensuring pupils do as well as they can. The governing body shares this determination and commitment, challenging and supporting senior leaders in equal measure.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The quality of teaching is not yet outstanding. Occasionally tasks do not challenge pupils and questions do not extend their thinking.
- The detailed guidance seen in the marking of literacy is not always present in other subjects. Steps to help pupils achieve success in their work are not always adapted well enough for pupils of different abilities.
- Expectations about how well pupils present their work in different subjects and year groups are not always high enough. As a result, some work is untidy.
- Although comprehensive and detailed, action plans by leaders at all levels sometimes lack specific milestones to check progress and identify next steps for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed seven teaching sessions, all of which were joint observations with the two deputy headteachers. In addition the inspector made a number of shorter visits to classrooms, looked at a wide range of pupils' work and listened to them read.
- Discussions were held informally with pupils in classrooms. In addition the inspector met with a group of pupils, six members of the governing body, including the Chair, a representative of the local authority and members of staff, including senior leaders and those with particular responsibilities.
- The inspector took account of the 14 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters written by parents and the results from the school's own recent consultation with parents. The responses from staff to the inspection questionnaires were also considered.
- She observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including information on pupils' current progress, the school's plans for improvement, the management of teachers' performance, the use of pupil premium funding and documentation and records relating to pupils' behaviour and safety.

Inspection team

Yvonne Mills-Clare, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs through school action is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support through the pupil premium funding is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The majority of pupils are from White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average.
- A very small number of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which is the minimum expectation of pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Since the last inspection, there have been several changes in staffing, at both classroom and senior leadership levels, with two deputy headteachers, as part of a job-share, joining the school. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher was absent through temporary sickness.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve progress and raise the quality of teaching to outstanding across the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - increasing the challenge for pupils and ensuring that the questioning of pupils consistently explores their knowledge and understanding and challenges their thinking
 - checking that the steps given to pupils to help them achieve success are adapted to take more account of their different abilities
 - extending the good practice seen in the marking of literacy to all subjects so there is clear guidance for pupils on how to improve all aspects of their work
 - ensuring expectations of how pupils present their work are sufficiently high in all year groups and subjects.
- Improve the effectiveness of checking the school's performance by ensuring school development and action plans contain specific milestones against which to measure the impact of actions and identify actions to bring about further improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- The majority of children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly typical for their age overall, although a small but significant number of children demonstrate skills that are below expectations in some key areas of learning. They settle quickly, so that by the time they enter Year 1 the majority of pupils are working within or close to expected standards.
- This promising start is built upon well in Key Stage 1. Progress is speeding up for the majority of pupils, so that by the time they leave Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics are average, with more pupils attaining the higher Level 3 than is average across the three tested areas.
- Pupils' current work and school assessments show that this good progress continues in Years 3 to 6, so that by the time they leave Key Stage 2 standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In the 2013 tests all pupils attained Level 4 in all three tested areas, with the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in writing being average and above average in reading and mathematics. This represents good achievement across the school.
- Strong achievement in reading is a feature throughout the school. As a result of the good teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), more pupils than is average reached the expected level in the Year 1 phonics screening check in 2013. Pupils in Year 2 are enthusiastic readers. They read fluently and confidently and talk knowledgeably about the books they enjoy, and the authors they prefer. They demonstrate good strategies when faced with reading unfamiliar words.
- Pupils in Year 6 recognise the importance of reading. They are confident in running the school library for other pupils in the school. They use reading for research purposes as well as for pleasure. They have a very good understanding of what they read, including underlying meanings. They read clearly, with expression and assume a variety of voices for the different characters.
- The teaching of writing is good. As a consequence, standards in writing have improved faster than the national trend, over the last three years. In 2013 all pupils attained the expected Level 4 in writing. Teachers create many opportunities for pupils to write at length during literacy lessons and through other subjects. Themes and topics are chosen to capture and promote the interests of pupils.
- The school has maintained above-average standards in mathematics because the subject is taught well, with many practical sessions enjoyed by the pupils. Test results in 2013 showed that the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress was much higher than average. There was also a rise in the proportion making expected progress but this was less marked than the increase in reading and writing. Leaders have introduced several strategies to address this issue. Improving the policy on teaching skills of calculation, the introduction of new resources and opportunities to apply the skills they have learnt have all been implemented and are accelerating progress.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium funding, including those eligible for free school meals, achieve well. In 2013 all these pupils attained expected levels by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. In reading, standards overall were one term ahead of their classmates. Throughout the school, pupils work at standards which are close to those of other pupils. This demonstrates the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive effective support from skilled classroom assistants. As a result, across the school they make the same good progress as their peers.
- The most able pupils are tracked carefully by the school. School assessments show that they make similarly good progress to their peers, reaching above-average standards in the tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.

The quality of teaching is good

- Despite changes in staffing, teaching has improved since the last inspection and is now good. This is reflected in the accelerated progress being made by increasing numbers of pupils across the school. Regular and rigorous checking of the quality of teaching, with an appropriate emphasis on the impact that teaching is having on pupils' learning, has been instrumental in bringing about this improvement.
- Well-planned challenges through lively and interesting activities bring out the best in pupils. A very good example was seen in a lesson where pupils were solving a murder mystery by using their mathematical knowledge of missing numbers and simple algebra. Learning was well organised and all adults displayed good subject knowledge and high expectations of the pupils.
- Questioning, at its best, probes and teases out pupils' knowledge and understanding so that pupils are consistently challenged. This was evident in a mathematics lesson where pupils were measuring out quantities of liquids, using different scales on measuring jugs. Opportunities were taken to question in order to raise pupils' awareness of these differences and to address any misconceptions encountered by the pupils. This aspect of teachers' work, however, is not used consistently well in all year groups and classes.
- Good use is made of available resources to help pupils learn. For example, good use of the school's electronic whiteboards helps to keep pupils focused in their learning. Interesting displays abound in literacy, with evidence of pupils' work and exciting vocabulary to aid the flow of their writing. Pupils are given the steps they need to take in order to succeed in their learning. However, these are not always adapted to take account of a pupil's ability and so opportunities to set aims even higher are missed.
- Pupils' workbooks indicate that literacy is taught well, with many opportunities to use pupils' writing skills in other subjects. Often there are opportunities for pupils to use discussion to provoke and fire their imagination. For example, pupils were enthralled as they moved through a carousel of activities giving pupils clues and evidence in order to make up their own story. This linked well to the Anglo-Saxon topic they were working on and provoked lively discussion on what the artefacts could mean.
- Although marking is effective in literacy books and guidance tells pupils how to improve their work, this practice is not as consistent in all subjects.
- The high expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always as high in the presentation of their work. Although some books are well presented and neatly written this is not the case in all classes and year groups.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils enjoy school. They are generally attentive in lessons and are keen to do well. Only where activities lack some challenge does attention for some pupils wane.
- They move around the school sensibly and with care and thought for others. The playground is well equipped and spacious, offering plenty of areas where pupils can play football and other group games, while leaving ample room for quieter pursuits. This ensures pupils play well together following their own interests. As a consequence the break and lunch times are social occasions where pupils can relax and return to lessons refreshed and eager to learn.
- Pupils have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, behaving in a way that reflects the strong Christian values taught by the school.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel safe in school and parents unanimously agree. Parents are very supportive of the school and are appreciative of the help and support it provides for pupils and their families.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the different forms that bullying can take, including those dangers posed by the internet or by mobile phones. They are adamant that bullying is rare, but are confident that should it happen, it would be dealt with swiftly and appropriately by the

school.

- Pupils relish the responsibilities they are allocated. They have responsibilities in the classrooms and Year 6 pupils regularly run the lunchtime library. The school council has now been replaced with a regular opportunity for all pupils to 'have their say' through the class 'Pupil Voice' sessions. Pupils are happy in school. They arrive punctually and are smartly dressed in school uniform. Despite the small numbers of pupils on roll, which can have a great impact on absence figures overall, attendance over time is broadly average. The current year's figures suggest that attendance has improved and has nudged slightly ahead of attendance nationally.
- Classrooms are tidy and bright and resources are readily available to pupils. Classrooms are uncluttered and the playground is 'litter-free'. Pupils are proud of their school and are eager to speak to visitors about their experiences.
- The school promotes good levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Class and whole-school assemblies reinforce the school's values. Pupils work together well and appreciate different traditions and religions through taught lessons and their many fundraising activities.
- The primary sports funding is being used well to provide before- and after-school activities led by professional coaches. The school takes an active part in team games with other schools and the pupils are keen to represent their school in a variety of tournaments.

The leadership and management are good

- School leaders are determined in their ambition to move the school forward. This resolute focus is communicated fully to governors and the staff off the school, who share the drive for improvement.
- The appointment of two deputy headteachers, who share the role, together with the development of subject leaders, has strengthened the leadership team. In partnership with the headteacher leaders work together well to improve the performance of the school. This teamwork has been instrumental in bringing about the improvements that have been made.
- Leaders check the school's work and have an accurate view of its performance. Action plans created by senior and subject leaders include the correct priorities and timelines for monitoring. They detail actions and staff responsibilities. These plans, however, do not always clearly identify specific milestones against which leaders can judge the impact of actions or document the next steps for improvement. As a result, it is not always easy to keep a close eye on the overall effectiveness of actions on pupils' achievement.
- Teaching and learning have been managed well. Arrangements are used effectively to promote school priorities and set targets for the year. The outcomes of the management of performance are shared with governors to check that pay awards and support, if required, link to the achievement of targets.
- Despite some changes in staffing since the last inspection, regular and effective checks of pupils' learning in classrooms have meant that pupils' progress has continued to improve and is now good.
- The tracking of progress gives all groups of pupils the opportunity to succeed. Regular meetings with teachers discuss any lack of progress and swift intervention and support is put in place. This demonstrates the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity.
- The subjects taught in school meet the needs of pupils well. In order to address the different needs in the mixed-aged classes, the school assesses the skills achieved by pupils, so that continuity of progress, even within the same theme or topic, is seamless. Leaders check that there is an appropriate focus on the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Trips, visits and visitors to school enhance pupils' learning well.
- The local authority knows the school well. Through designated personnel, it has worked closely with school leaders, provided support and training for teachers and governors since the last inspection and rightly believes that the school is now well placed to improve further.
- Primary sport funding has boosted work in physical education by enabling the school to extend the range of activities it provides, before, during and after school. Teachers have the opportunity

to work alongside professional coaches, in order to raise their levels of expertise.

- The safety of pupils is of paramount importance to the school. As a result, arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors understand the strengths of the school and the areas that require further development very well. Through headteacher reports, their own meetings and visits to the school they ensure they are well informed about pupils' progress in order to be challenging, yet supportive of the school. They have a good understanding of the quality of teaching through regular updates in meetings and understand how the performance of teachers affects their progression through the pay scale. Governors have a variety of expertise and interests. As a result, areas of responsibility are allocated accordingly. Governors have links to subjects and classes and meet regularly to discuss their areas of responsibility. They understand how the pupil premium is spent and keep a close eye on the progress of the pupils that are supported by this funding to ensure they continue to progress well.

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	105806
Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	442377

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	88
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Abbott
Headteacher	Beryl Morgan
Date of previous school inspection	17 October 2012
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