

# Thelwall Community Junior School

Thelwall New Road, Thelwall, Warrington, Cheshire, WA4 2HX

**Inspection dates** 9–10 June 2015

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- The headteacher's incisive analysis of the school's work, her high expectations and determined leadership have consolidated pupils' good achievement.
- The highly effective governing body has an extremely clear understanding of how well the school works. They provide strong challenge and support to ensure that the school's good work continues and improves.
- Leaders' management of teaching and learning is effective. Good quality is maintained and this has a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils' outstanding attitudes and behaviour are a major contribution to their good achievement. They are eager to succeed in all that they do. They feel entirely safe in school and say that they are extremely well cared for.
- The quality of teaching is consistently good. Pupils' different abilities are provided for well. They say that they enjoy all lessons.
- Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are securely above average. Pupils make good progress year on year. They achieve well in other subjects, notably in physical education, music and art.
- The school's work with other local schools ensures good improvement in leadership skills and the accuracy of the school's assessments.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Written feedback given by teachers through marking pupils' books does not always help pupils to improve all of their work.
- Standards in spelling are not high enough.

## Information about this inspection

- Learning was observed in a range of lessons and through a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors discussed the school's work with staff members, pupils, an external consultant to the school, a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- Also taken into account were the views of 48 parents who responded via the online questionnaire Parent View. Questionnaires completed by members of staff were also considered.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and examined a wide range of documentation including: national assessment data and the school's own assessments; curriculum information; external reports and the schools own view of its work; minutes from governing body meeting and safeguarding documents.

## Inspection team

Kevin Johnson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Aileen King

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized primary school in which virtually all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is well below the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is very low when compared with the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- There have been changes in the teaching staff since the previous inspection.

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

- Ensure that all marking clearly informs pupils about how to improve their work and how they are required to respond.
- Take steps to improve the quality of pupils' spelling.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management are good

- Leaders' high aspirations for the school are clearly communicated to staff, pupils and parents.
- With first-class support from the governing body, the headteacher and staff have created a very positive climate for learning in which all forms of discrimination are challenged. Teaching is good and pupils feel safe and behave extremely well.
- Senior staff are positive role models with regard to professional relationships and the promotion of equality of opportunity. In turn, this provides clear guidance for pupils in their own relationships and consideration of others.
- The headteacher is very ably supported by the assistant headteacher in gathering evidence of the school's work and measuring its impact. Positive action has been taken to deal successfully with issues from the previous inspection. Planning for further improvement is realistically based on leaders' very accurate view of the school's current position.
- A valuable part of the school's development is its work with local schools, especially its feeder infant school. Governors and staff work closely to make sure transition is as smooth as possible and that assessments provide accurate starting points from which to ensure pupils' good progress. Staff also share views and practices about teaching and leadership with other local schools to benefit their own professional development.
- Light-touch support from the local authority is a measure of its confidence in the school leaders' capacity to continue to improve the school.
- Teaching and learning is managed effectively. New staff members quickly settle to the school's routines and meet the non-negotiable expectations with regard to teaching standards. The quality of teaching is checked robustly. Any issues are quickly followed up and rectified through appropriate training and support.
- The management of the curriculum is effectively shared among all staff. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. They support each other well. New primary curriculum planning is well adapted to pupils' needs and interests. There is a good range and depth to what pupils learn that enables them to achieve well. The very extensive calendar of club activities and visits provides a rich variety of experiences which helps pupils to nurture their particular interests. Sport is extremely popular and pupils are very enthusiastic about residential visits and their forthcoming musical production of *Oliver*.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils from different backgrounds celebrate their cultures and languages by sharing their information with others. Pupils are very tolerant and always respectful of others, whatever their circumstances. Their school council elections and visits from the Mayor give pupils insights into the workings of democracy. Pupils understand that responsibility carries with it a need for fair-mindedness and reliability. They have a strong sense of what is right and wrong and are extremely well prepared in the social skills and awareness they need to contribute fully to life in modern Britain.
- Leaders manage the school's sports funding very effectively. Pupils' participation in sport and their well-being have been boosted by the increased range of activities. These have led to considerable success for pupils in sports tournaments. Teachers' skills have improved as a result of their work alongside sports coaches employed by the school. Sport is now an important feature of the school's life and pupils enjoy it a great deal.
- Governors and school leaders check the progress of disadvantaged pupils very closely. Pupil premium funding is entirely directed towards the provision of additional teaching support so that the achievement of those pupils being supported by the fund at least matches the good achievement of others in the school.
- Safeguarding checks are very thorough and nothing is left to chance with regard to all statutory health and safety requirements for the school. Pupils' attendance is carefully monitored and remains consistently well above average.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body is highly effective. Governors check the school's work very thoroughly. The good range of expertise among governors leaves them well placed to challenge and support the school very effectively. They understand national performance data fully and use their knowledge well to check pupils' performance and challenge the school, when necessary. They work productively with governors from other schools. Governors have an accurate overview of the quality of teaching. They understand the principles of performance management and apply criteria with due integrity when reviewing teachers' salary awards. They ensure that underperformance is tackled and success rewarded. Finances are managed very efficiently.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils arrive in school on time and eager to learn. They believe that their school is 'safe, fun and exciting'. They keep their school and the playground tidy. Their unfailing politeness and courtesy makes them excellent ambassadors for their school.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic about learning. They have no favourite lessons; they say that they like all of them equally well.
- In lessons, pupils give teachers their full attention. They relish the challenges that teachers provide and settle quickly to work. Pupils work very well together and help each other a great deal when there are problems to be solved.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is outstanding. They move very sensibly between classes and their table manners in the dining room are excellent. Pupils really enjoy each other's company in the playground where they are very active and where they say any falling out is rare.
- Pupils contribute greatly to the everyday life and ethos of the school. They are very keen to take on responsibilities as play leaders. Classroom monitors help to keep the days running smoothly. The school council makes sure that everyone has a say in school affairs. They take on responsibility for charitable fund-raising as well as fulfilling a role in the appointments of new staff.
- Pupils are exceptionally proud of their school and of what they achieve.

### Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Pupils report that they are extremely well cared for. This is a view shared by parents.
- Pupils discuss safety issues and share their views with governors who respond swiftly to any concerns raised.
- Pupils strongly affirm that incidents of bullying or offensive name-calling are extremely rare. They are confident that any such incidents would be dealt with immediately.
- Pupils know what bullying is and the different forms it can take. Visits from police and fire services to warn them about internet and other dangers means that they are extremely well informed about how to keep themselves safe outside of school.

## The quality of teaching

is good

- Good teaching throughout the school ensures pupils' good progress. Nevertheless, there is no complacency about the quality of teaching and continuous development opportunities for teachers are used well to improve skills and effectiveness.
- Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning and progress. They understand pupils' particular needs and deal with them sensitively, working skilfully with groups and individual pupils.
- Good subject knowledge, particularly in computing, means that technology is used well across subjects as a tool to help pupils learn. Other resources used in lessons are well matched to the tasks that different ability groups are given.
- Adults question pupils well to assess their understanding of topics. They provide timely help during lessons in order to correct misconceptions and move learning on at a good pace. Use of the new system for marking is not consistent; pupils are not always well enough informed about how to improve their work.
- Mathematics is taught well. There has been significant improvement in standards in the subject. Pupils have a good understanding of number and of how number systems work. They have many opportunities to use what they know in order to investigate and solve problems. During the inspection, an interesting challenge for Year 6 pupils was their mathematical investigation into running a theme park where they had to calculate potential profit and loss.
- Opportunities for discussion are a strong feature in English lessons and underpin pupils' good learning in the subject. Pupils share and clarify their ideas before writing so they are prepared well when tasks begin. Pupils practise and develop writing for different purposes well across the curriculum. There is a strong focus on the teaching of many of the basic skills. This currently has a positive impact on pupils' standards of punctuation and grammar, but the focus on ensuring accurate spelling lacks rigour.
- Good learning in other areas of the curriculum ensures that pupils achieve well in physical education and

music. There is also good depth to their learning in history, geography and science. Displays of pupils art work are also very commendable.

### **The achievement of pupils is good**

- When pupils enter Year 3 they are working securely at standards expected for their age. A significant proportion, about 20% of pupils, are working at above this.
- National data on pupils' progress suggests that in 2014 pupils at best made the progress expected of them by the end of Year 6. Inspection evidence confirms, however, that the prior attainment of pupils in that year group was assessed and judged too highly. As a result, the added value shown in the national data is not entirely accurate.
- The school now works closely with its feeder school to agree standards at the point of transfer and check the accuracy of assessments. Key Stage 1 assessments and the school's own baseline results now provide accurate starting points and help to confirm that, year-on-year, progress through the school is good.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 dipped slightly in the two previous years. Although just above average, they were not as high as they had been before that. This was due to a proportion of lower attaining pupils, some of whom entered the school part-way through the key stage. Nevertheless, those pupils and others made good progress from their starting points.
- Standards in the school are currently above average in reading, writing and mathematics. School assessments and the standards seen in pupils' work indicate improvement in writing and mathematics, with more pupils than previously working at the higher levels.
- Pupils achieve well in reading by the end of Year 6. They read widely and are very clear about the kinds of books they enjoy best. Pupils read aloud confidently, with good expression and have a good understanding of what they read.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are provided for well and consequently make good progress. Their specific learning is planned well and adapted to their needs. Parents comment positively on the organisation and efficiency of the support provided for those pupils.
- The most-able pupils are given addition challenges when they attend sessions at the local high school. Those sessions supplement the challenges planned for them in school. Pupils with particular talents are, for example, signposted to outside providers to develop their skills in sports or the performing arts. All pupils who enter the school at the higher Level 3 attain at least the higher Level 5 in reading, writing or mathematics by the end of Year 6. The number of pupils who work at the highest possible Level 6 has increased in the current year.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding is very small and so any comparisons with other groups are statistically unreliable. However, school assessments show no gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others in the school. They make good progress and achieve 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111000
<b>Local authority</b>	Warrington
<b>Inspection number</b>	461738

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>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	158
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Lisa Maidment
<b>Headteacher</b>	Susan Robinson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 May 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01925 263365
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