

Thongsley Fields Primary and Nursery School

Buttsgrove Way, Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire PE29 1PE

Inspection dates

18–19 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- After a turbulent time, with changes to both leadership and staff, the recently appointed leadership team has wasted no time in implementing improvements but it is too early for these to have fully impacted on outcomes for pupils.
- At the end of key stage 1, pupils attain below the national average in their phonics screening check. This has been so for several years.
- Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 has been too low. Disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress as other pupils nationally.
- Governors have not sufficiently monitored the impact of funding provided to raise the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- In 2016, at the end of key stage 1 the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in reading and writing was well below that of other pupils nationally.
- Leaders do not ensure that teaching, learning and assessment are of a consistently good quality across the school consequently pupils make variable progress across subjects and year groups.
- Attainment in science is well below the national average at key stages 1 and 2.
- Some pupils are not sufficiently challenged in their learning because teachers' expectations are not high enough.
- Teachers, including in early years, do not make sufficient use of assessment information to plan their lessons so that all pupils make good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are respectful of each other and adults. They conduct themselves well around the school.
- Specialist teaching is supporting pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to make improved progress
- In key stage 1 mathematics, pupils are making good progress.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils say they feel safe at school.
- Support for pupils for whom English is not their first language is effective. They make good progress from their starting points.
- Disadvantaged children are now making good progress in the early years.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress in reading at all key stages by ensuring that:
 - there is a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics
 - activities planned in guided reading provide sufficient interest and challenge for all pupils
 - the profile of reading is raised and pupils are exposed to good-quality texts.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and achieve
 - all teachers have the same high expectations of the way work is presented
 - all teachers plan lessons which interest pupils so that their engagement and behaviour is consistently good
 - teachers across all phases, including early years, make better use of assessment information to plan lessons which challenge all groups of pupils sufficiently so they make at least good progress.
- Improve outcomes in science and the foundation subjects by ensuring that:
 - subject leaders plan work which increases pupils' subject-specific skills and understanding as they progress through the school
 - all teachers have good knowledge and understanding of the full range of subjects that they teach.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has been through an extended period of instability. During this time, leaders took on more senior roles, but lacked the capacity to drive improvements. Subsequently, the school has been well supported by the local authority. The new headteacher and senior leadership team are now in place and working well together. They are ambitious and in a short time have put in place a raft of improvements, but it is too early to fully impact on outcomes for pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across year groups and a range of subjects. Consequently, pupils' progress is variable in reading, writing and mathematics and across other subjects and year groups.
- Leaders do not evaluate pupils' progress sharply enough. As a result, pupils are not effectively supported to make swift improvements.
- The pupil premium funding is used to support disadvantaged pupils' learning and well-being. Governors are aware that the school's current pupil premium strategy is not sufficiently detailed and this is currently being developed. Leaders have not identified the barriers to pupils' learning and the reasons for the approaches they have selected. They have not clearly identified how they will measure the success of their actions. As a result, disadvantaged pupils' learning needs have not been fully addressed. This slows down the progress of disadvantaged pupils in some areas.
- The school improvement plan is clearly focused on pupils' progress. It provides staff with clear direction and is well understood by middle leaders. Leaders have accurately identified the school's key strengths and areas for improvement. For example, in response to slow progress in reading in 2016, the school introduced a focus on reading throughout the school. Recent internal assessments demonstrated that this is beginning to have a positive impact.
- Leaders ensure that the additional special educational needs funding is spent appropriately. The school has recently put in place robust systems to identify pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Careful provision of specialist teaching programmes is having a positive impact on improving these pupils' progress.
- Most parents say that the school responds well to any concerns they raise. However, a few parents expressed their concerns about the quality of communications they receive. Recent turbulence, changes in staffing and leadership and the rapid adoption of new practices have left some parents concerned about the pace of change. Leaders and governors are working hard to increase communication and understanding among this group of parents.
- The curriculum is relevant and balanced. It covers all the areas of the national curriculum. Links are made between subjects through topics. For example, in a Year 5 geography lesson, pupils were thoroughly absorbed by a lesson on famous people from Scotland.
- Pupils' learning is enriched beyond the classroom through a forest school, educational visits linked to the class topics and special events such as World Book Day.

- Sports funding is used effectively. The funding has been spent on the membership of the local sports partnership which provides a specialist physical education teacher to teach pupils in all year groups alongside their teachers so that the teachers strengthen their own practice in teaching a range of sports. The partnership provides for a range of clubs such as tennis, netball and tag-rugby. Additionally, funding is spent to increase pupils' participation in a range of sporting competitions and to offer additional swimming classes for older pupils who have not yet mastered this skill.
- Leaders promote British values effectively through the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about different religious faiths and cultures within the school. Consequently, they learn to respect cultural diversity. Pupils are able to talk with some understanding about other religious beliefs and say they find this interesting. Pupils have a good understanding of the democratic process and are able to exercise this through voting for posts of responsibility.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted within the school. Pupils are taught personal, social and health education and have reflection time to consider current issues. Celebration assemblies develop the school values and link these well to British values. Pupils are given opportunities to take on leadership roles and exercise democratic values through, for example, electing the school council and applying to be peer mediators. The school provides a range of additional clubs which enhance pupils' social and cultural experiences. These include a wide range of sports, gardening, chess, games, drama, sewing and art. Pupils also benefit from cultural trips, such as to museums and the pantomime.

Governance of the school

- The governing body has recently been restructured and all governors are new or new to role. Governors have an action plan for their own development based on an external review which they commissioned. They are undertaking a range of training to enhance their skills.
- Governors commissioned an external review of pupil premium spending and are now developing their strategy in the light of this.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the overall strengths and weaknesses of the school and have been involved in planning for improvement.
- Governors support the school well and have made difficult decisions in order to secure improvement. However, the level of challenge to school leaders is not yet sufficiently robust to improve pupils' outcomes, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Governors have, of late, gained an improved understanding of school assessment information in order to be more effective in this capacity.
- Governors use their regular visits well to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are robust and fit for purpose. Governors regularly check the single central record to make sure that all the necessary checks are carried out for all the adults who work with pupils in the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

- Staff are fully trained in all necessary areas and keep this training up to date. There is a strong culture of vigilance with regards to safeguarding pupils. For example, there are displays and posters in prominent areas around the school to inform pupils and staff who they could contact, should there be any cause for concern.
- Staff are well trained to notice any changes in pupils' behaviour that may put them at risk from the dangers associated with radicalisation and extremism. Equally, staff are well trained to spot any signs of abuse and know the school's internal procedures well, should they need to raise a concern about a pupil. Pupils told inspectors they feel safe at school.
- Most parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agree that their children are safe and well looked after at this school. Most parents say that the school will respond well to any concerns they raise.
- Leaders work closely with external agencies and the local authority to make sure that pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are safe and well cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent across year groups and within subjects. Teachers do not always use assessment information to match work closely enough to the needs and abilities of all pupils. When this happens, learning slows and pupils do not make fast enough progress.
- The work in pupils' books shows that they are always provided with work that is appropriate for their age, but sometimes pupils are asked to repeat tasks they already know well. As a result, pupils' progress is limited in some classes across the school.
- Teaching does not fully challenge pupils of different abilities, including in some classes those who are the most able including the most able disadvantaged pupils. Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough. Sometimes, the learning activities do not provide pupils with work that demands more of them and so do not deepen their learning. This limits the progress pupils make. Pupils commented that they find their work easy and would particularly enjoy more challenge.
- Pupils write at the standard expected for their age and are developing their basic writing skills well. Pupils have ample opportunity to write at length beyond their English lessons and this is having a positive impact on their progress in writing. Topic books show examples of strong writing stimulated by pupils' interest. For example, Year 2 pupils wrote well and at length about the Great Fire of London. They were applying their knowledge of spelling, punctuation and grammar in history.
- Teachers and teaching assistants offer good support for pupils who are new to English, through one-to-one support, carefully designed tasks and additional materials and these pupils make rapid progress as a result.
- Some teaching assistants are highly skilled in supporting pupils who require one-to-one support. As a result, where this is the case, some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to access the curriculum and take part in all the school offers. These pupils make good progress as a result.
- In mathematics, pupils are given opportunities to develop their reasoning skills through

problem-solving tasks, which is having a positive impact on progress in most year groups. In key stage 1, pupils are challenged in mathematics and the work given is suitably matched to the needs of different groups of pupils such that all are well provided for, for example, in one lesson pupils were calculating missing mass amounts. Some pupils added and subtracted one digit numbers, some two digit numbers and some solved clues that involved multiplication and division with fractions.

- The school has recently adopted a new feedback policy but teachers do not yet apply this consistently. The feedback given to pupils does not always lead them on to further learning. Often, the feedback merely prompts them to repeat an aspect of a task and does not challenge them to think deeply about their work or extend their knowledge and understanding. Teachers' feedback is based on checking against a series of steps of increasing difficulty. In too many lessons, teachers had not planned these well enough and therefore the level of challenge did not increase.
- Leaders and teachers have begun to raise the profile of reading across the school. For example, during 'Book Week' pupils dressed up as their favourite fictional characters and explained their preferences. In Reception, parents are encouraged to read with their children at the start of the day. As yet this is not fully embedded. As a result, not all pupils recognise the value of reading. In key stage 1, pupils have home-school reading diaries which are regularly updated and many families are making good use of these to encourage their children to read widely. Inspectors listened to individual pupils read and heard them read during their visits to lessons. Younger pupils do not always use skills they have learned well to sound out unfamiliar words. Not all older pupils read with expression and accuracy. Pupils with English as an additional language read confidently.
- In other subjects, inspectors saw some teaching which excited and interested pupils. For example, in a design technology lesson pupils worked enthusiastically in pairs to test the strength of structures, research stone age building materials and then set about writing a design brief for a stone age home. They used the language of evaluation to consider their choices. Sometimes parallel classes were covering the same subject matter but the quality of their learning was not as good in some classes as in others. In some subjects, teachers' subject knowledge sometimes limits the learning, although some subjects such as French and physical education benefit from being taught by specialist teachers. In other subjects, subject skills are not developed well enough as pupils move up the school.
- There is insufficient coverage of science which has resulted in low outcomes. There is evidence particularly in key stage 1 books that pupils are now undertaking more investigations which are allowing for greater development of scientific methods. For example, Year 2 pupils predicted which materials would stretch the most.
- There is a purposeful and stimulating learning environment with useful displays and bright working walls.
- Generally, lessons are calm and orderly. Where pupils' concentration wandered, it was usually the result of misunderstanding of, or lack of interest in, the task. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and this promotes learning well. The presentation of pupils' work in books is not always good.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Staff are working hard to develop the school values system. These now form the content of the assemblies. Many pupils can discuss the school values such as resilience, but this does not always translate into the way they learn; for example, in lessons pupils did not always persevere with tasks.
- Pupils understand the importance of being fit and healthy. Pupils know about making healthy choices when selecting snacks during playtimes and at lunch, but older pupils say they did not generally do this.
- Pupils and parents say that bullying sometimes happens at their school. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying. They say they feel confident to raise any concerns should they need to. Bullying logs show that incidents are resolved quickly.
- The school has had a higher than average number of exclusions for some time and these disproportionately affect the more vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils. The school has recently adopted new approaches to dealing with pupils at risk of exclusion but it is too soon to assess their impact.
- The school has a number of recorded incidents of derogatory language. These are dealt with, but incidences are not reducing, although leaders are now reviewing systems to help make these more effective.
- The school has a successful peer-mediation service, which pupils know about and value. Pupils talk very positively about this.
- Pupils told inspectors they are safe at school. They learn how to stay safe through personal, social and health education lessons and assemblies. They demonstrate a good understanding of internet safety.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Although a minority, too many pupils were seen by inspectors who were disengaged from their learning or who were engaging in low-level misbehaviour in lessons.
- Pupils were not always clear about the school behaviour system and some were unclear about the school's rewards and sanctions. The school actively promotes good behaviour through celebration assemblies which attract significant numbers of parents. Although pupils were motivated by some of the rewards offered, some pupils expressed to the inspector that they preferred to be able to take home a letter or recognition of their achievement. The pupils eagerly look forward to receiving some rewards and classes compete to win the 'golden dustpan', for the classroom that is kept most clean and tidy, presented by the school cleaning staff.
- The small number of pupils who have very challenging behaviour have support programmes in place which have a positive impact, in most cases, on improving their

behaviour and reducing repeated incidents.

- Pupils from different backgrounds learn and play amicably together. They conduct themselves well around the school, and are polite and respectful during playtimes despite some occasional boisterousness; this contributes to an orderly school environment.
- Attendance has improved and is now very close to the national average. The school takes swift action to address persistent absence, through robust monitoring, clear policies, escalation routes which are followed through and working with parents. The school provides a well-used breakfast club which has helped reduce both absence and poor punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- In 2016, a smaller proportion of key stage 2 disadvantaged pupils in the school attained the expected standard in reading and mathematics than was the case for other pupils nationally. In writing, the proportion was broadly similar. At the higher level, the proportion of most-able disadvantaged pupils was below that of other pupils nationally in all three subjects.
- Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is variable across the school. This is because of inconsistent teaching over time. The work in current pupils' books confirms this.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 is broadly in line with the national average in writing and mathematics, but below the national average in reading. The percentage of Year 6 pupils meeting the expected standard in 2016 for reading, writing and mathematics combined was below average.
- In 2016, in key stage 2 disadvantaged pupils did not make as much progress as other pupils nationally in reading. Current school assessment evidence suggests that in most year groups, disadvantaged pupils are now making better progress. Pupils' books show that disadvantaged pupils are making as much progress as others of the same ability in their classes.
- In 2016, the most able pupils' progress and attainment at the end of key stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. Progress of the most able pupils within lessons and in books is variable. Inspectors saw no differences between the progress in books of the most able disadvantaged and other most-able pupils within the same subjects and classes.
- In 2016, in key stage 2 girls did not make as much progress as boys in reading, writing or mathematics. Current school assessment evidence suggests that girls are making as much progress as boys in most classes in all three subjects.
- In 2016, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard in reading and writing at the end of key stage 1 was well below the national average. In mathematics, however, a broadly similar proportion of pupils met the standard as nationally. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils achieving the expected national standard was below that of other pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This was also the case for the proportions meeting the greater depth standard. The majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who are in Year 2 are making better progress in

mathematics.

- Pupils' learning in lessons and books seen during the inspection, as well as the school's own assessment information, shows that pupils are now making good progress in mathematics and writing. However, observations by inspectors of a number of lessons where pupils were engaged in reading activity suggest that progress is still too slow, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Attainment in science in 2016 was below that of pupils nationally at both key stages.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities made less progress than others at all key stages in 2016. This is an improving picture as case studies show that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making better progress from their starting points.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Pupils enter early years with skills and knowledge below those typical for their age and in 2016 made progress in line with expectations. Children's work shows progress in early years is variable between classes. The proportion of children who reached the level of development expected for children of their age at the end of Reception was below the national average and has been for three years, though it has been improving year on year. Current children's work suggests that the proportion of children who are likely to reach the expected level of development in 2017 is likely to remain below the national average, but be closer than in previous years.
- The early years lead has introduced some effective programmes, such as an early literacy skills project which offers additional support with language development. This is having an excellent impact on accelerating the progress of disadvantaged children.
- The early years leader has deployed the early years pupil premium funding well and as a result disadvantaged pupils make better progress and attain better than others in their class.
- Assessment practices vary in early years. Some adults use their assessment information well to plan and deliver learning activities that inspire and motivate children, while for others the link between assessment and planning is not strong enough.
- Phonics is taught effectively by some teachers and some teaching assistants, but again effectiveness is not consistent. Where practice is strong, children gain a good knowledge of phonics to support them with their reading and writing. They use their phonics well to read unfamiliar words. However, in some sessions, teachers and teaching assistants lacked understanding of a clear approach and the learning that was taking place was unclear.
- The early years curriculum includes attractive activities which capture children's imagination and talents. It covers all areas of learning. For example, in a lesson observed by inspectors, children used invisible and light pens and labels to encourage them to write labels for the farm yard and to check if anyone else has written on the label. Children were writing enthusiastically and maintained interest for some time.
- Children generally behave well in the early years. They are at ease when working with

their peers, regardless of their diverse backgrounds. Some areas offer children well-planned activities and so are more conducive to a calm learning environment than others where resources are less well organised. The outdoor area is not sufficiently focused on learning.

- There are positive relationships between parents and early years staff. Parents benefit from opportunities to support their children's learning and development. For example, parents benefit from 'play and stay' and 'read and stay' sessions. There is encouragement to read at home every day and the classes compete for the highest number of readers who have read every day. This is displayed on the doors.
- The school promotes tolerance well; for example, there was an excellent display about the Rainbow Fish: 'We are all different but we swim together.'
- All safeguarding and statutory welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	133699
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10031582

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary and nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair	Graham Heywood
Headteacher	Theresa Buttery
Telephone number	01480 375321
Website	www.thongsleyfields.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	office@thongsleyfields.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on the website as some required information about the pupil premium strategy is lacking.
- This school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding is above average.
- The proportion of pupils from different minority ethnic groups and who speak English as an additional language is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and are receiving support is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school during the academic year is high.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards for 2016. These set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 31 lessons or parts of lessons, some jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors looked at pupils' books during visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with the chair of the governing body and three other governors.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read during their visits to lessons and individual pupils in key stages 1 and 2.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, two assistant headteachers, the special educational needs coordinator and other middle leaders.
- Inspectors held telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account 13 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, including free-text responses. Additionally, inspectors met with parents informally at the beginning of the school day.
- Inspectors analysed 28 staff responses to Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including: the school's assessment information on current pupils' progress; plans for improvement; the school's self-evaluation; information related to managing teachers' performance; records relating to behaviour and attendance; safeguarding documentation and checks that leaders make on the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Susan Sutton, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gay Whent	Ofsted Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Ofsted Inspector
Sean Powell	Ofsted Inspector

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