

# Whaley Thorns Primary School

Portland Road, Langwith, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG20 9HB

## Inspection dates

14–15 September 2017

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

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have made many improvements since the last inspection. These have not yet led to pupils making consistently good progress throughout the school.
- Teaching is not yet good. Teachers often set tasks that do not build sufficiently on what pupils already know and can do. This means the work does not provide the right level of challenge to ensure that they make good progress.
- Teachers' expectations of what the most able pupils can achieve are too low. This includes some disadvantaged pupils. As a result, too few reach the highest standards, particularly in writing.
- Teachers give pupils some useful written feedback. They do not always insist that pupils use it effectively to improve their work, as required by the school's marking policy.
- Subject leaders now support other staff and lead initiatives. They do not check that these actions have made a positive impact on the quality of teaching or on pupils' progress. This leads to inconsistency.
- Governors now have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ask challenging questions of senior leaders. They rely too often on the headteacher's interpretation, however, rather than checking for themselves.
- Parents and carers are not as involved as they could be in supporting their children's learning at home. Some pupils do not read regularly enough.
- Some pupils have poor attendance. Too many pupils are absent without an adequate reason.

### The school has the following strengths

- Leaders and governors have accelerated the pace of improvement over the past year.
- Improved leadership and teaching in the early years ensure that children make a flying start to their school lives.
- Early reading skills and phonics are taught well.
- Pupils behave well around school and show positive attitudes to learning. They feel safe and are kept safe.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well through interesting topics and tasks.

## Full report

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and so accelerate pupils' progress, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - use assessment information well to plan challenging tasks that build on what pupils already know and can do
  - provide sufficient guidance to pupils, particularly the most able, so they understand how they can further improve their writing
  - follow the school's policy and make sure that pupils use the feedback given to them to improve their work
  - make sure that pupils read regularly and more often
  - encourage parents to support more actively their children's learning at home.
- Improve the skills of leaders at all levels by:
  - ensuring that subject leaders regularly check on the impact of their work to help them eliminate the remaining inconsistencies in teaching
  - developing governors' expertise in checking for themselves how well the school is doing.
- Improve attendance by:
  - ensuring that all parents are clear about their responsibilities
  - involving parents at the earliest opportunity when there are concerns over attendance
  - developing ways to recognise more positively those pupils who attend regularly.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- The pace of improvement following the last inspection was initially too slow. Leaders subsequently made changes more rapidly but have not yet ensured that teaching is consistently good across the school. As a result, pupils are not achieving well enough.
- Senior leaders have supported subject leaders in developing their skills in checking on the quality of teaching. Subject leaders now visit classrooms, scrutinise pupils' workbooks, and then use their findings to offer support and training to staff. They are at the early stages, however, of evaluating whether this support has actually improved teaching. As a result, inconsistencies in teaching remain.
- By working with other schools and the local teaching school alliance, leaders have ensured that teachers are more aware of what pupils should be able to achieve for their age. This is helping to raise expectations and secure better progress for some pupils. Not all teachers, however, are sufficiently confident in assessing the work of the most able pupils and this hampers pupils' progress.
- Leaders have made some effective use of the funding for disadvantaged pupils to support specific subjects and groups. Additional support for phonics has enabled pupils in Year 1 to achieve well in the screening check. Staff have not given enough help to the most able disadvantaged pupils, however, and these pupils do not achieve as well as they should. The leader responsible for disadvantaged pupils is committed to ensuring that these pupils make good progress. She has reviewed how funding is used and has introduced new ways of working. It is too early to assess the impact of these changes.
- Leaders recognise that pupils' attendance, particularly of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is too low. Actions they have taken so far have not been effective enough. They are revising their procedures to ensure that attendance improves quickly.
- A minority of parents expressed concerns about the school in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and when they spoke to the inspector on the playground. Many were particularly concerned about a lack of communication, bullying, and the school's response to their concerns. As a result, the inspector looked very closely at these issues, gathering a wide range of evidence. Pupils said there is very little bullying now and they are confident that staff would sort it out quickly if it did happen. They say that there have been incidents in the past, though. Leaders have introduced a number of new ways to communicate with parents, such as by using text messages, the school's website and a noticeboard. They recognise that communication with parents is not as strong as they would like.
- Leaders have established a programme of events and activities to involve parents in the life of the school and in their children's learning. Some of these have been more successful than others. Leaders have further plans to improve this aspect of the school's work.
- The headteacher has evaluated the school's performance and accurately identified the key areas for improvement. The school's plans provide clear direction for staff at all

levels, who now understand their roles and responsibilities. Leaders and governors use the arrangements for performance management to challenge underperformance. Support and training is provided when they identify weaknesses in teaching.

- Leaders have established a culture of respect and tolerance in which discrimination is not tolerated. The good relationships between leaders, staff and pupils have created a positive environment for learning.
- The broad and balanced curriculum engages pupils' interest. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching of music, as well as the opportunity to learn to play an instrument. Good use is made of the primary physical education and sport funding to engage pupils in a range of sports, including cricket. Pupils participate in competitive sporting events with local schools and have had some success in cross-country running. Trips and events, such as a whole-school Roald Dahl afternoon, a dance performance in a local town, and clubs such as gardening and choir, further enrich pupils' learning experiences.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Leaders ensure that teachers give pupils regular opportunities to learn about other faiths and cultures, as well as to develop a clear understanding of British values.
- The local authority and a local teaching school alliance have provided effective support for the school over the past year and this has made a significant contribution to improvements, especially in the early years foundation stage. The local authority has an accurate view of the school's strengths and what it needs to do to improve further.

### **Governance of the school**

- Since the school's last inspection, the governing body has undergone an external review of the way that it works in order to improve its effectiveness. Governors have undertaken training and, as a result, have a better understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They ask more challenging questions when holding leaders to account but accept that they rely too heavily on reports from the headteacher, rather than checking on progress for themselves.
- The governing body has worked closely with the headteacher to review the school's financial position and ensure that it is using its funding efficiently and effectively.

### **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders, other staff and the governing body review and refine policies and practices regularly. Procedures for checking the suitability of adults working with children meet statutory requirements. Regular training for staff ensures that they know how to keep pupils safe and what to do if they have any concerns.
- The designated leader for safeguarding ensures that procedures are followed rigorously and that records of incidents and concerns are carefully maintained. When they need specialist support, staff work very effectively with external agencies to offer timely and effective support to pupils and their families.
- Most parents who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire and those who spoke to the inspector on the playground agree that the school keeps pupils safe.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good throughout the school and across subjects.
- Some teachers do not use assessment information effectively to set tasks at the right level of difficulty for pupils. Work in some mathematics books shows that pupils complete a large number of calculations of a similar type before moving on to more difficult work. As a result, their progress slows. In other books, however, pupils complete a small number of problems and then check their understanding. If their learning is secure, they move on to more challenging work.
- Teaching of some groups is not consistently good across the school. Teachers sometimes set work for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, that is too easy for them. Their tasks lack challenge. This is because teachers do not know enough about what these pupils need to do to be successful, particularly in writing.
- Some teachers do not follow the school's marking policy fully. They do not ensure that pupils follow up their teacher's useful feedback to improve their work.
- Teaching assistants provide effective support for pupils, particularly those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They check pupils' understanding, talk through their ideas and then offer further guidance as pupils record their responses.
- The teaching of phonics is effective in the early years and key stage 1. Pupils use their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make to good effect when reading and writing unfamiliar words. Pupils' knowledge and application of spelling patterns and exceptions in key stage 2 are not as strong. Leaders have recognised this and have introduced a structured spelling programme. It is too early to assess its effectiveness.
- Staff have received additional training to strengthen their mathematical understanding and improve the teaching of mathematics. As a result, pupils are developing strong calculation skills and are increasingly successful in using these to solve a range of problems. Teachers are beginning to provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning.
- Pupils say they enjoy the homework that is set, particularly when they prepare topics to present to the class or find and learn poems. Teachers, however, are not always checking that older pupils are reading regularly and/or widely enough.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils are evident. Classrooms and shared areas include bright and colourful displays to support, challenge and celebrate pupils' learning. Teachers plan interesting topics and learning experiences that motivate and engage pupils. Some teachers use resources and practical apparatus well to support pupils' understanding, but this is not consistent practice across classes.
- Evidence in pupils' books shows that teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and handwriting have increased over the past year. Pupils have responded well to this, although leaders recognise that pupils' handwriting is not always legible enough or fluent.

**Personal development and welfare**

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. Parents expressed some concerns about bullying in Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, but pupils say that it does not happen often at school. They are confident that staff would deal with any issues if they arose. They say there were some incidents of bullying and rough play last year but that this is no longer the case. The Friendship Team (a group of older pupils) works closely with school leaders to tackle any issues that arise before they become a problem.
- Staff promote pupils' safety in a range of ways. Regular assemblies, displays and special events, such as the visit of the local fire service, help keep pupils safe at home as well as at school. Pupils are very aware of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and know to tell an adult if they have any concerns.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and reflect the school's values of determination, respect, enjoyment, achievement and motivation – DREAM. Pupils try hard in lessons and are keen to do well, but teachers do not insist they routinely follow up teachers' comments and improve their work. Most pupils have responded well to higher expectations of the presentation of their work.
- The well-organised breakfast club provides a warm and welcoming environment and a healthy start to the day as pupils of all ages eat and play together.

**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' conduct at all times of the day is good. Behaviour in lessons is generally very good and attitudes are positive. When tasks are not well suited to pupils' needs, a few can lose focus. Pupils recognise that behaviour has improved since the last inspection because expectations are higher.
- The extensive grounds ensure that everyone has space to play and have fun at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils enjoy using the new equipment that has been installed, as well as joining the lunchtime clubs on offer. The arrangements for 'shared dining' in the hall allow older pupils to take responsibility for younger ones – serving drinks and helping them with their food – as well as talking with them and making new friends.
- Attendance improved in 2015/16 but it fell again last year to below the national average, despite the school's actions. Leaders recognise that too many pupils are regularly absent.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- The progress that groups of pupils make in different key stages and subjects varies too much. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching have meant that all pupils are not making good progress. Improvements in teaching have not yet produced faster progress.
- In 2016, at the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above that seen nationally. The proportion of pupils reaching the highest standards, however, in both writing and mathematics was below that seen nationally. Pupils made progress that was broadly in line with other pupils nationally from the same starting points.
- The preliminary assessment information for 2017 shows that standards at the end of key stage 2 have declined and progress has been slower than in the previous year, particularly in reading. Inspection evidence indicates that some older pupils are not reading widely and often enough to develop fluency, good comprehension and a wider vocabulary.
- In most year groups, more pupils are now reaching the standards expected for their age. The most able and some disadvantaged pupils, however, are not making as much progress as others, especially in writing. Pupils have opportunities to write at length and in a range of subjects, but teachers are not familiar enough with the highest standards in writing for each age group. This means they have not provided the right support and guidance to help pupils to reach them.
- In key stage 1 in 2016, the progress that pupils made in reading, writing and mathematics from leaving the Reception Year was in line with the national average. In the most recent assessments in key stage 1, progress was particularly strong in reading. This was despite a fall in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard. The results reflect the importance that the school places on this area with the younger pupils.
- As a result of effective teaching, the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 1 who meet the expected standard in phonics is consistently in line with or above the national average.

## Early years provision

## Good

- Children make a good start to their education in the early years. The commitment of the leader and the hard work of staff have ensured considerable improvement since the last inspection. The leader has visited other schools and has developed a clear vision for the early years that she has ably communicated to other staff and parents.
- Children enter the nursery class with skills and abilities that are often below or well below those typically found in other children nationally, particularly in communication and language. The proportion who reached a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year improved considerably in 2016 and was broadly in line with that seen nationally. This standard was maintained in 2017, representing good progress from the children's starting points.
- Staff have high expectations of what all children can achieve. The teacher makes

accurate assessments when the children join the school and then uses these to plan exciting and challenging activities that meet children's needs. There is a suitable balance between tasks that are led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. Tasks are designed to build children's early reading, writing and mathematical skills effectively.

- During the inspection, children in the Reception class were learning about healthy bodies as they took on the roles of doctors and patients at the surgery, made skeletons out of cotton buds or prepared a healthy meal in the kitchen (after writing their shopping list). Adults' sensitive prompting and questioning encouraged children to extend their spoken sentences and to use words such as longer, shorter and half when cutting up the buds.
- Children's well-designed learning experiences within the school are enriched by visits out into the local community. Children travelled by train to a local town to visit the library and then to make pizzas in a restaurant – a treat enjoyed by all.
- Early years staff have worked hard to develop positive relationships with parents. The Mouse Club, which welcomes parents in to school to learn alongside their children, has been particularly successful. The leader is committed to ensuring that these relationships are further strengthened so that parents are better able to support their children's learning at home.
- Children develop knowledge, skills and attitudes in the early years that prepare them well for entering Year 1. Children are happy, confident and behave well. They listen carefully and take turns, working and playing together happily.
- Children are well looked after. All of the relevant welfare and safety requirements are met in the early years.

## School details

Unique reference number	112793
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10036072

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	122
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Zoe Ellis
Headteacher	Kay Walker
Telephone number	01623 742604
Website	<a href="http://www.whaleythornsschool.co.uk">www.whaleythornsschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@whaleythorns.derbyshire.sch.uk">enquiries@whaleythorns.derbyshire.sch.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	13–14 October 2015

## Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Whaley Thorns Primary School is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. The number on roll is declining.
- The very large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above the national average, as is the proportion of disadvantaged pupils.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.
- The school runs an on-site breakfast club.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed pupils' learning throughout the school. Most observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector heard pupils in Year 6 read. Together with the headteacher, the inspector looked at pupils' work in their English and mathematics books.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders and the chair of the governing body. The inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes of a range of meetings, assessment information, the school's self-evaluation of its effectiveness, improvement plans, and behaviour, attendance and safeguarding records.
- The inspector spoke with several groups of children and observed them at breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- The 64 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were considered. The inspector took into account comments provided by parents as part of this survey and spoke with parents on the playground before the school day started.

## Inspection team

Joanne Sanchez-Thompson, lead inspector    Ofsted Inspector

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