

Thornton Primary School

Thornton Road, Ward End, Birmingham, West Midlands, B8 2LQ

Inspection dates

17–18 October 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The passionate, informed and determined leadership of the headteacher successfully unites the whole school team. There is a concerted focus on progress. This has secured significant improvements in the past two years.
- Senior leaders share the headteacher's vision and provide high-quality support to teachers. As a result, the quality of teaching is continuing to improve.
- Governors have effective skills and a clear understanding of the school. They make a strong contribution to the vision and rigour that are driving the school forward.
- The vast majority of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are now making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' conduct in classrooms and when playing on the playground is good. Instances of poor behaviour are very rare.
- Effective safeguarding ensures that pupils are safe. All staff have a clear understanding of how to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils have a good understanding of British values and of different faiths and cultures.
- The curriculum is broad, and pupils enjoy a wide range of experiences. As a result, the pupils are keen to learn.
- Parents are very supportive of the school. They feel that the teachers are 'always there to talk to'. They say their children are making progress and 'get the right amount of homework'.
- Pupils make too many spelling and punctuation errors in their writing and teachers are not giving them enough help to spot these and where their writing could be improved. Handwriting is not consistently of a high standard across the curriculum.
- Phonics is taught well and standards are now above average. Pupils enjoy reading and make good progress. However, pupils are not always making good use of skills such as inference and deduction to read at greater depth.
- Leaders recognise the need to provide further training for leaders who are new to their role in order for them to contribute fully in improving the quality of teaching and pupil progress.
- The school does not comply with the government guidance about what schools must publish.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in reading and writing and accelerate the progress pupils make by:
 - making sure teachers provide pupils with more opportunities to improve their spelling and punctuation when writing
 - ensuring that teachers develop the pupils' ability to evaluate the effectiveness of their writing and suggest improvements
 - ensuring that the quality of handwriting is of a high standard across the curriculum
 - making sure teachers share with pupils and their parents the skills pupils need to develop their reading to a greater depth.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - strengthening the impact and accountability of leaders who are new to their role in improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress
 - ensuring that the school complies with government guidance on what maintained schools must publish on their website about the reasons for pupil premium strategies, equality objectives, curriculum content for maths, music, RE and governors' responsibilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is determined to raise standards. She has worked successfully to address weaknesses in teaching and learning by taking well considered and effective actions. She has managed turbulence in staffing well. Consequently, the quality of education has improved and high aspirations are set for pupils and staff.
- Due to a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation senior leaders have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas that need to improve. Leaders' improvement plans are detailed and accurate. Leaders work well with advice provided from external consultants to secure improvements.
- Leaders are determined that all pupils achieve well, no matter what barriers to learning they may have. Regular meetings are held with teachers to discuss the progress of each pupil. Swift action is taken to support pupils who need it. This has meant there has been a marked improvement in the progress of all groups of pupils, particularly pupils who are disadvantaged.
- Effective strategies are in place which have improved teachers' skills and expertise. The management of performance and training is targeted sharply to meet the needs of teachers. Staff value the support they receive.
- Middle leaders are not effective because most are new to their role. Senior leaders recognise the need to provide further training for new leaders so that they can contribute fully to improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subjects or areas of responsibility.
- Leaders take appropriate steps to make sure that all groups of pupils have an equal chance to succeed. Strong provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures that funding is used effectively to meet a wide range of needs.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is carefully targeted to support their needs and catch up in the way they should. For example, the funding has been used on additional teachers to carry out intervention programmes, further training for staff and pastoral support.
- The curriculum is well designed to enhance personal development and attitudes to learning. It has been revised to improve cohesion and cross curricular links to provide opportunities for pupils to apply their reading, writing and mathematical skills across the curriculum. Pupils are motivated to learn because they enjoy events and trips, such as a visit to a stately home to enhance children's understanding of what life was like 'at home' in Britain in the Second World War.
- British values are integrated across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils are taught well through a comprehensive personal, social, health, emotional programme. As a result, pupils have a clear understanding of equality, respect for all and knowledge of the rule of law.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Pupils develop an understanding of democracy and human values through lessons and in the election

of school councillors. Opportunities for pupils to learn about different faiths are strong. Teachers draw upon the resources provided from the different faiths and cultures pupils bring.

- A wide range of clubs provides something of interest for everyone, with a high proportion of pupils taking part regularly.
- With the appointment of a sports coach who works with all the children, leaders make sure that pupils' physical health is given high priority. The primary physical education and sport funding is used well to provide increased opportunities for competitive sports and tournaments with other schools. Additional training for staff to refine their skills in teaching physical education has helped to ensure that the improvements are sustainable.
- Parents have a very positive view of the school. They say their child makes progress and they appreciate the support they are given to help with homework.
- Leaders have not ensured that the school complies with government guidance on what maintained schools must publish on their website.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. Governors share and contribute effectively to the school's culture of high expectations and focus on school improvement. They receive regular reports from the headteacher and leaders. Consequently, they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and the areas that need to improve.
- Governors bring a relevant range of expertise and knowledge that help to provide effective challenge and support. They receive appropriate training to carry out their role. Governors are well placed to hold leaders to account.
- Documentation shows governors ask challenging questions, for example about how well disadvantaged pupils are achieving. They make frequent visits to the school to check for themselves the impact of teaching on pupils' learning and development. As a result, the governing body has contributed significantly to the improvement in teaching and outcomes since the last inspection.
- Governors and leaders have utilised funding effectively to reduce the surplus budget that had accumulated over the last few years. Governors check that additional funding, for example that for disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, is used effectively.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Senior leaders and governors have ensured that there is an ethos of keeping children safe in school. Staff are well trained and are well aware of any dangers posed to pupils.
- Pupils feel safe, and parents also agree that their children are safe. The school gives good attention to a range of risk assessments to keep both pupils and staff safe.
- Procedures are updated regularly. Staff know the pupils well and detailed records are kept about all safeguarding issues. The school works well with parents and outside

agencies, including health and other professionals, to make sure pupils are supported effectively and kept safe.

- Appropriate checks are made on employees and visitors. There is a code of conduct in place for staff.
- The school's links with individual families, where pupils live in particularly vulnerable circumstances, are highly effective. Staff make themselves available to ensure that all pupils and families receive the support they need.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved since the last inspection and is now good across the school.
- Most teachers and teaching assistants have good subject knowledge owing to the training that they receive. This helps them to explain clearly what pupils must learn and enables them to teach concepts securely so pupils progress well. Teachers demonstrate and model what pupils need to do effectively and ensure that they all understand their work so that lesson objectives are met.
- Teachers intervene at timely intervals to check on pupils' learning. They address any misconceptions that individuals might have and give the necessary guidance about what must be improved, thereby enabling pupils to make faster progress.
- A number of strategies have been introduced to enable pupils to make faster progress. All pupils are presented with challenging tasks and questions that are designed to deepen their understanding.
- Teachers have developed very positive relationships with the pupils and expect pupils to work hard in lessons. Pupils respond well to this. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- There are a number of pupils who speak English as an additional language and a few who are in the early stages of speaking English as an additional language. These pupils are taught well. They are given extra support to develop new vocabulary and language structures based on the context of their current learning.
- Pupils have regular homework. It is set according to the age and ability of the pupils. Homework usually covers mathematics, spellings, daily reading, research work and projects. Parents have a very positive picture of homework and pupils say they enjoy it. Teachers organise mathematics workshops for parents on how to support their child to do their homework. Parents value this assistance from school.
- The teaching of mathematics is good. Teachers ensure that pupils are fluent in their mathematical skills and have regular opportunities to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Immediate support is provided for any pupils who have not shown an understanding.
- Reading is taught well. Pupils across the school enjoy reading and read both at school and at home. Younger pupils use their phonic skills to decode unknown words and pupils talk enthusiastically about their favourite authors, including David Walliams and Chris Riddell. However, pupils are not yet making full use of, and are not aware of,

higher-order reading skills such as inference and deduction from the text.

- Teachers link writing to the curriculum and this provides opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills. Teachers provide helpful prompts, which support the pupils in making good progress in their writing. However, pupils do not have enough opportunities to check their spelling and punctuation or to suggest improvements to their writing. Handwriting is not consistently of a high standard across the curriculum.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. They are confident and have a positive self-esteem because of supportive relationships among staff and pupils. Pupils know how to be a successful learner and have positive attitudes to learning.
- A dedicated pastoral team provides care and support to pupils and their families. The school is proactive in finding ways to meet pupils' health and emotional well-being. As a result, pupils thrive in this nurturing environment.
- Pupils unanimously report that bullying and name-calling is rare. The school provides a wide range of support systems to help children know how to stay safe and free from bullying and harassment, such as anti-bullying weeks and a high staff-to-pupil ratio at break and lunchtimes.
- Pupils have been taught how to manage risk, which equips them for the outside world. Pupils understand the risks of using the internet and the potential risks of social media. Consequently, pupils say they feel safe in school.
- Pupils know how to lead healthy lifestyles. They have frequent opportunities to take part in physical activities, often led by the sports coach (who is also a member of the pastoral team). Breaktimes and lunchtimes are lively, active and provide additional opportunities for physical activity. Pupils proudly talk about how the school has inspired them to take up more physical activity.
- Children have many opportunities to lead in a range of situations, such as playing a key role in the school achieving the Rights Respecting Award. Pupils are clear that the school council is an effective body. They list numerous examples of how the school council has improved the school for the better, for example by asking for better equipment for the playground and raising money for charity. There is much evidence that the pupils are very involved in driving improvements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff, pupils and parents agree this is the case.
- Pupils show a good awareness of the expectations that leaders have of their behaviour. This was seen consistently in all years, within lessons and at breaktimes and lunchtime. Pupils manage their own behaviour well and are positive about the school's behaviour management system.

- School records show that incidents of poor behaviour in the classrooms are extremely rare. When they do occur, effective strategies are put in place to support pupils with challenging behaviour so learning is not disrupted.
- Attendance has improved and is now in line with national averages. This is due to a range of effective strategies. Pupils attend regularly and arrive punctually. Attendance has improved for all groups of pupils. A portion of pupil premium funding is used to pay for breakfast club for some disadvantaged pupils and this helps to improve attendance rates.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils enjoy learning and tackling the routine challenges they are presented with. Due to raised expectations in learning their achievement has improved since the previous inspection and is now good. By the end of Year 6, pupils have the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes they need for secondary school. Just about all parents who responded to the recent questionnaire carried out by the school feel that their children are making good progress.
- Unvalidated 2017 outcomes in key stage 2 have improved substantially from previous years. Pupils' attainment in reading was similar to the national average, just below in writing and well above in mathematics.
- From 2014 to 2016, the school met the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results. This has now been addressed. Teachers are very focused in ensuring that no pupils are left behind. Work in pupils' books as well as information in the school's rigorous tracking system, show that, typically, most pupils make good progress in reading and writing and accelerated progress in mathematics.
- Pupils also make good progress in a range of other subjects. For example, pupils develop their scientific knowledge by investigating which materials are waterproof or by explaining how animals have adapted to their environment. During the inspection, pupils were keen to talk about how they develop their skills in physical education, which helps them to be more successful in competitions and tournaments.
- The teaching of phonics is consistently strong and the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check is above average.
- In key stage 1, the school has successfully maintained attainment at least in line with national averages in all areas and increased the proportions exceeding the national average in writing and mathematics.
- Strong leadership of the provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities means they receive timely, good-quality support and make good progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress. This is because their learning needs are identified and addressed well. These pupils have extra support in class and very quickly become proficient in speaking English, ensuring that they reach their potential.
- Work in books shows that most-able pupils and most-able disadvantaged pupils make at least good progress and in some cases accelerated progress in their knowledge,

understanding and skills across the curriculum. This is as a result of the challenges provided for them in lessons.

- Disadvantaged pupils make equally good progress to reach standards that are close to the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This reflects not only the good teaching that they receive but also the effectiveness in the way in which the additional funding is spent so that they perform as well as they can.

School details

Unique reference number	103268
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10037158

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	660
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr A Ali
Headteacher	Mrs S Simmons
Telephone number	0121 327 0824
Website	www.thornton.bham.sch.uk
Email address	s.simmons@thornton.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 October 2015

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about the curriculum content of mathematics; music; religious education; personal, social, health and economic education; the reasons for the approaches chosen to support disadvantaged pupils; equality objectives and governors' responsibilities on its website.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on Key Stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- There has been a high turnover of teaching staff since the previous inspection.
- This is a very large school. The school does not have a Reception class. There is one Year 1 class and one Year 2 class. At the start of Year 3 the school takes an additional four classes from a local infant school so that in key stage 2 there are five classes in each year group. The school is currently being restructured to become a junior school only with four classes in each year.
- The percentage of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs

and/or disabilities is just above that of most schools.

- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and who receive support from the pupil premium is well above average.
- Most of the pupils are of Pakistani heritage. Other pupils come from a range of backgrounds. Most pupils speak English as an additional language, although a small number are in the early stages of learning to speak English.
- The school runs a breakfast club and a number of after-school clubs.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes. Inspectors observed some lessons jointly with school leaders. An inspector also observed an assembly.
- Pupils' work was reviewed during lessons and a more detailed scrutiny was made of pupils' books with the subject leaders for English, mathematics, science and topics. Pupils read to the inspectors and the inspectors spoke with pupils throughout the inspection in order to gain their views.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Discussions took place with: the headteacher and deputy, assistant headteachers, middle leaders, four members of the governing body, a group of teachers and teaching assistants, a school improvement and leadership consultant and the director of continuous school improvement.
- Inspectors spoke informally to a number of parents and carers to seek their views about the school. There were too few responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, to analyse, so inspectors considered the results and analysis of the school's own recent surveys.
- Inspectors took account of the responses from 35 staff and 416 pupils who responded to their questionnaires.
- A range of documents was reviewed. These included: the school's self-evaluation summary, action plans for school improvement, records of the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, performance management documents, minutes of the meetings of the governing body, the school's own assessment information and records relating to behaviour, attendance and the safeguarding of children.

Inspection team

Lynda Townsend, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Sarah Ashley	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Noble	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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