

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Thorn Grove Primary School

Thorn Grove, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5LD

Inspection dates:

22 and 23 October 2024

Outcome

Thorn Grove Primary School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils arrive at school happy and excited in the morning. They look forward eagerly to the learning challenges that their teachers have in store for them. Pupils learn an ambitious curriculum that is enriched by a wide variety of interesting extra-curricular experiences.

Pupils usually behave extremely well. They apply themselves to their learning, working hard and with enthusiasm. Pupils develop a good understanding of the subjects that they study. They often talk keenly and confidently about their learning.

The school is warm and welcoming. Pupils are respectful of other people's cultures and lifestyles. Differences are celebrated. Pupils talk positively about signing their 'school pledge' to be kind to each other. Pupils say that each person is included and respected here. They are passionate about championing the rights of everyone. This helps them feel safe and valued.

Pupils get along well with one another. They learn how to manage any disagreements maturely and the school gives them strategies to use if they fall out with their friends. This means that pupils are resilient and cope well if things go wrong. If they are unable to resolve their problems, their teachers are quick to respond with the help they need. Pupils also appreciate the time to talk with staff if they are feeling upset or worried.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school expects all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to achieve well. Everyone working at the school is dedicated to realising these aspirations. The school's curriculum is ambitious. It sets out clearly what pupils need to learn in each subject, at each stage of their education. The school has

implemented new approaches to address gaps in pupils' learning. This has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics.

Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They explain concepts clearly, showing pupils precisely what they need to know and do in order to succeed. Staff seek to understand any barriers to learning that pupils may have. They regularly ask pupils questions and address any misconceptions quickly. Teachers make effective adaptations to the curriculum, particularly for pupils with SEND. Consequently, pupils achieve well across the curriculum. Pupils draw confidently on what they already know when learning new things. This deepens their understanding and allows them to talk confidently about their learning. However, pupils do not get enough opportunities to produce high-quality writing, and teachers' expectations about the quality of writing which pupils produce are not consistently high enough. At times and across the curriculum, pupils' writing lacks depth and thoroughness.

Reading has a high profile in the school. Right from the start of the early years, children are immersed in high-quality books and stories. Phonics is taught consistently well. This ensures that children get off to a great start in learning to read. Staff make sure that no one gets left behind in their learning. Pupils, including those with SEND, are given effective, focused support to help them to catch up quickly. As pupils move through the school, their love of reading grows because of the support that the school provides. The range of books which pupils read continues to expand and they become confident, fluent readers.

There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere around the school. Children are taught the importance of good behaviour from the moment they start in the Nursery or Reception classes. They quickly settle and learn to follow routines, develop their independence and become a good friend.

The school supports pupils and families, through meetings, reminders and encouragement, in order to promote good attendance. The school carefully checks attendance information and has recently introduced new approaches for improving attendance. However, these initiatives are very new and some pupils still have high levels of absence. They miss important learning and the wider opportunities for development that the school offers.

Through the wider curriculum, pupils learn how to keep themselves safe, including online. Carefully planned outdoor learning develops pupils' resilience and confidence. Pupils learn to take sensible risks, including when climbing trees. They learn to value diversity, for example by respecting other people's religious beliefs. A prayer space is available for anyone who needs it. The school joins events with the local community, for instance to commemorate Remembrance Day. Pupils talk proudly about never being a bystander if anyone needs help. The school enriches its curriculum and brings learning to life for pupils through well-considered educational trips. For example, pupils visited Stansted Airport to learn about the history of flight. There is a selection of clubs which pupils enjoy, including Spanish and gardening, and lots of competitive sporting opportunities.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the consideration that leaders give to their workload and well-being. Staff work collaboratively and provide support to colleagues. Governors know the school well. They provide highly effective support and challenge to leaders and act strategically in the best interests of pupils. Leaders have ensured that the school is continuing to provide pupils with a high-quality education that prepares them well for future success.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's expectations for the quality of pupils' written work, including handwriting, are not high enough. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to extend their writing skills across the curriculum. As a result, the quality of pupils' writing is too variable and sometimes lacks depth and detail. There are too few opportunities for pupils to develop their ideas. The school should ensure that pupils have more opportunities to improve and practise their writing so that it is of a consistently high quality across the curriculum.
- A small group of pupils is persistently absent. This impacts the learning of these pupils, and they miss some opportunities for learning and well-being provided by the school. The school should strengthen its efforts to secure the regular attendance of all pupils.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in May 2019.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	117277
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345187
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	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Anne Hummersone
Headteacher	Pete Luck
Website	www.thorngrove.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	9 and 10 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school operates a breakfast and after-school club for pupils.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also discussed the curriculum with leaders.
- The inspector met with senior staff in the school, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other school leaders.

- The inspector met with the chair of the governing body, other members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector met with other school staff, including teachers and support staff.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector took account of a range of other information, including the school's development plans, school policies and governing body minutes, and local authority visit reports.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and at other times around school and discussed behaviour with pupils throughout the inspection.
- The inspector considered the views of staff through Ofsted's staff survey and of parents and carers through responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text comments. The inspector also gathered the views of pupils and staff through interviews and discussions conducted throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Nick Rudman, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2024