

Inspection of a good school: Thorndown Primary School

Hill Rise, St Ives, Cambridgeshire PE27 6SE

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 November 2022

Outcome

Thorndown Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Thorndown Primary School thrive within its supportive, caring, and inclusive environment. Relationships are warm and respectful. Pupils are kind and considerate towards each other. Pupils feel safe. They know that adults will help them if they have any worries. Pupils say that bullying hardly ever happens but if it does, adults sort things out quickly.

Pupils enjoy their learning and take pride in this. They are eager to talk about learning and share their achievements. Pupils work hard. They respond positively to adults' high expectations. Pupils listen carefully in lessons. They share their ideas well when working in pairs or groups. Pupils behave well in lessons, and during playtimes.

Leaders have planned a wide range of activities and opportunities beyond the taught curriculum. Pupils are enthusiastic about the many different clubs available to them. They particularly enjoy curriculum enrichment days. Pupils have many opportunities to take on responsibilities. These include as school council and eco council representatives.

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and would recommend the school to others. They typically say the school 'has been brilliant for my children.'

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

Leaders have designed and developed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. They have carefully selected what pupils need to know and remember from the early years up to Year 6. In most subjects, pupils build their learning on what they already know and can do. For example, in mathematics, younger children memorise their number facts to 10. As pupils move into Year 1 and beyond, they use this knowledge to work with larger numbers and calculations. While the curriculum is well established in most subjects, there are a few curriculum areas where plans are not fully in place across all year groups. In

these curriculum areas, pupils do not develop their understanding or remember as well because they are yet to be taught all of the required content.

Teachers have secure subject knowledge. This helps them to teach each curriculum subject well. The use of spoken language is a priority in all year groups. Teachers explain new and important words at the start of each lesson. They encourage pupils to use these words in full sentences. As pupils move through school, they are increasingly confident to share their thoughts aloud.

Teachers use assessment effectively to identify and address misconceptions. Any pupil falling behind receives extra support to help them to catch up. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). These pupils have their needs identified early. Individual plans identify the support that will help them to access the curriculum. This ensures pupils with SEND achieve well.

Leaders make reading a high priority across the school. They have devised a systematic approach to teaching phonics and early reading. This begins as soon as children start in the pre-school and Reception classes. All staff teaching phonics have received appropriate training and have secure subject knowledge. New readers have access to books that help them to practise the sounds they are learning. This helps pupils to develop into confident, fluent readers. Where pupils have gaps in their reading knowledge, staff provide extra support. Older pupils enjoy the interesting texts they read in class and those linked to the topics they are learning. They enjoy having lots of books to choose from in the library and in classroom reading areas.

Pupils behave well in lessons, when moving around the school and at break times. From pre-school upwards, pupils understand adults' expectations and respond well to these. Pupils understand the school's approach to managing behaviour. Staff consistently apply this. Leaders do not currently have a system in place to keep a check on behaviour across the whole school. This means that they are not able to spot any trends.

Leaders provide well for pupils' wider development. Pupils have effective pastoral support. This helps them to manage their feelings. Leaders ensure that the curriculum and wider opportunities help to develop pupils' talents and interests. Pupils enjoy the wide range of clubs available. These include for sports, music, dance, and yoga. Pupils learn how to care for the environment. They learn about healthy relationships and the importance of tolerance and respect. They understand and celebrate diversity.

Staff feel well supported. They enjoy working at the school and are proud to do so. Many talked about 'the Thorndown family.' Governors know the school well. They carry out their statutory duties appropriately. Governors focus on the right priorities. They provide effective support and challenge to school leaders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have ensured that there is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. All staff receive regular and relevant training. This equips them to recognise any signs that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Staff are highly vigilant and know what to do if they have a concern about a pupil. Leaders take prompt action in response to any concerns raised. This includes involving other agencies where needed.

Leaders ensure that all required pre-employment checks are made and are recorded accurately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some foundation subjects there are new curriculum plans in place. These new plans are not yet fully embedded across all year groups. As a result of this, some pupils struggle to remember the new and novel content. Leaders should complete the work they have started to fully implement curriculum plans in these subjects. This will ensure that pupils remember their learning long term.
- Leaders do not have a system to monitor and evaluate patterns of poor behaviour across the school. As a result, leaders are not able to identify trends and patterns of behaviour before they become more prevalent. Leaders need to implement their plans to introduce a monitoring system and put strategies in place to enable them to effectively monitor and address patterns of poor behaviour.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. 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 would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which 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 in April 2017.

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](#)' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	136814
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10241647
Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	538
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frank Newton
Headteacher	Rhys Thrower
Website	www.thorndownprimaryschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 – 27 April 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thorndown is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Leaders provide a breakfast and after-school club.
- An interim headteacher is leading the school during the autumn term. The substantive headteacher takes up their role in January 2023.
- Leaders do not currently use any alternative provision to meet the needs of children.

Information about this inspection

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken this into account in their evaluation of the school.

- The inspector carried out deep dives in three subjects: early reading, mathematics, and history, to evaluate the quality of education. For each deep dive, the inspector met with subject leaders, considered curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to

teachers, spoke with pupils about their learning and scrutinised samples of pupils' work.

- The inspector observed some pupils read to staff and talked to them about their reading.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour across the site. She met with groups of pupils to seek their views of the school. She also spoke to pupils informally in class, around the school and at break times.
- The inspector met with the safeguarding team to discuss safeguarding.
- The inspector met with the special educational needs coordinator and scrutinised documentation for provision for pupils with SEND. She observed support for pupils with SEND.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation during the inspection, including curriculum plans, school development plans, safeguarding and behaviour plans
- The inspector considered the views of parents, including the 158 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and 158 free-text comments. She also considered the 76 responses to the online staff survey and 113 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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