

# Thorntree Primary School

The Greenway, Thorntree, Middlesbrough TS3 9NH

## Inspection dates

19–20 April 2016

## 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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils in key stages 1 and 2 do not achieve as well as they can because teaching has not been consistently good enough since the last inspection.
- The gap in standards between those supported by pupil premium funding and others nationally has not narrowed sufficiently at the end of key stage 2.
- Actions taken by new senior and middle leaders have not had time to ensure that pupils' progress is consistently good so that standards rise at the end of key stage 2.
- Progress in lessons is not always good because pupils are not challenged to do as well as they can. The support they receive from other adults is not always effective.
- Not all incidents of racist name-calling have been effectively tackled to ensure that this unacceptable behaviour is stopped.
- Leaders' plans for improvement are not sharp enough to ensure that improvements stay on track and are making a difference to pupils' outcomes.
- Governors have only recently begun to challenge school leaders effectively and this has not yet made a difference to the school's work.

### The school has the following strengths

- Staff have confidence in the new senior leadership team. They appreciate the good opportunities available to improve their teaching which is beginning to make a difference.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children settle quickly and they make good gains from their different starting points.
- The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) is effective and standards are now above average.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well in lessons. They are keen to learn and they enjoy exciting and interesting lessons supplemented by an appropriate range of visits.
- The use of the sports premium has been successful in ensuring that many more pupils participate in sporting opportunities.
- Pupils who have social and emotional needs are well supported by a range of services provided by the school.

## Full report

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

- Ensure that teaching is consistently good or better so that achievement improves for all pupils and progress of those supported by pupil premium accelerates, by:
  - providing more opportunities in all year groups for pupils to think more deeply and explain their understanding in mathematics
  - giving pupils more opportunities to use their own ideas in their writing and encouraging them to write as much as they are capable of
  - ensuring that teaching assistants always encourage pupils to think and do things for themselves
  - ensuring that verbal and written feedback consistently enhances pupils' learning.
- Improve pupils' understanding of diverse communities and individuals, and their awareness of racist name-calling, so that they are able to challenge unacceptable behaviour if it occurs.
- Further develop the effectiveness of leadership and management, by:
  - sharpening improvement plans to include clearly measurable steps to success and well defined timescales
  - implementing plans to ensure that governors challenge school leaders and hold them to account to increase the pace of improvement.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Over time, leaders' actions to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes have been hampered by frequent changes of teaching staff. They have struggled to ensure that all new developments are consistently implemented throughout the school and as a result achievement is not improving rapidly enough in some classes.
- Leaders' plans to improve the school are not sharp enough to ensure that developments are kept on track. Timescales are too broad to determine if new initiatives are being implemented quickly enough and the measures to check the success of actions are too vague to help governors evaluate their impact.
- There are a range of opportunities to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain such as taking responsibility as a play leader and being a school councillor. However, pupils' understanding of diverse communities and individuals is underdeveloped and this means that their social, moral and cultural development is not fully supported.
- Recently appointed senior leaders are acutely aware of the need to achieve consistent teaching. They know the strengths and weaknesses within the school and have begun to tackle the weaknesses. Where consistency has been achieved such as in the teaching of phonics, pupils' performance has improved quickly.
- Middle leaders now implement and check the progress of new developments. They know their subjects well and use their knowledge to improve the skills of other staff. The implementation of new initiatives such as enabling pupils to think more deeply in mathematics are at a very early stage of development and are not yet successfully applied in all year groups.
- Procedures to manage the performance of staff are clear and thorough. Targets set for teachers are specific and challenging. They are regularly held to account and performance is linked to pay progression. There are good opportunities for teachers, including those who are newly qualified, to improve their skills and where there has been stability a difference has been made.
- Checking of pupil performance and progress is regular and underperformance is quickly identified. Additional support is put in place to help pupils catch up. However, the quality of this support is variable and does not always ensure that pupils' learning is secure.
- In the past, pupil premium funding was not always carefully targeted to support eligible pupils' achievement to improve. Leaders and governors now ensure that the impact of funding is checked more carefully. As a result, the gap between this group of pupils and others nationally has closed at the end of key stage 1 and in early years and their attendance has improved. Leaders acknowledge that more still needs to be done to make sure that the funding makes a difference at the end of key stage 2.
- The curriculum has made a positive difference to pupils' attitudes to school and learning. Many first-hand experiences and the use of high-quality resources, such as studying different rocks or visiting allotments, engage pupils successfully. Clubs such as eco-club add to their enjoyment. Clear progression and guidance for teachers in promoting reading and mathematics skills through the curriculum are beginning to make a difference to achievement.
- The use of the sports premium is effective. Increasing numbers of pupils participate in the different activities offered. Staff confidence has been enhanced through the use of specialist coaches.
- The school's work to engage parents in pupils' learning has successfully ensured that increasing numbers attend meetings to find out about their child's progress. They are well informed about school developments and what pupils are learning.
- **The governance of the school**
  - A number of governors have recently been appointed and the chair of governors is new to the role. They are ambitious for the school and are aware of its strengths and what needs to improve. They realise that governors' checks on the school have not been thorough enough and that the level of challenge to school leaders was not sharp enough. This is now beginning to change. They have undertaken appropriate training and developed a raising achievement committee where they check pupils' progress and understand the quality of teaching more thoroughly. These plans are at an early stage of development and have not yet made a difference to increasing the pace of school improvement.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's policies are well understood and followed by staff. When concerns are reported they are dealt with appropriately. The website displays all relevant policies to support pupils to be safe so that parents are aware of the school's approach.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Changes to staffing over time has resulted in teaching which is not consistent enough across classes and year groups in key stages 1 and 2. Recently introduced programmes of work in reading, writing and mathematics have resulted in clearer expectations but inconsistencies remain and as a result pupils' progress is variable.
- Pupils, including those who are most able, are not always provided with activities which stretch them so they achieve as much as they can. Teachers guide pupils' writing too closely and do not allow them to use their own ideas and imagination enough. Those who are capable of 'getting on' by themselves are not given the chance to do so. Sometimes, pupils are not given a chance to write as much as they are capable of, for example when pupils are given worksheets which restrict their writing. Recently introduced initiatives to encourage pupils to think more deeply and explain their understanding in mathematics is resulting in pupils making more rapid progress in Year 6. For example, pupils were asked to explain why some statements about fractions were true or false after solving the calculation. However, these initiatives are not yet being applied consistently in other year groups.
- The feedback pupils receive about their learning is not always effective in deepening their understanding or developing their knowledge. In lessons, pupils' misunderstandings are not always addressed quickly enough and written feedback does not always follow the school's policy.
- The support provided by teaching assistants is variable, both when they are supporting small groups in class and working with children out of class. Some pupils receive too much guidance and help so that they do not have to think for themselves. At other times the support they receive results in good progress because expectations are more demanding.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Time is used well. Work is matched to pupils' capabilities and staff are well briefed to deliver lessons. They quickly realise when pupils are struggling and address the difficulties promptly.
- Pupils are generally keen to learn and attend carefully to adults. They try to do their best and have pride in what they do. They have good relationships with their teachers and cooperate well with each other in class, sharing ideas and thoughts.
- Lessons are generally well organised. Teachers prepare carefully with appropriate resources and equipment. For example, pupils who are dyslexic use coloured paper to write on to help them overcome difficulties.
- Teachers plan carefully so that pupils' skills and understanding build up progressively day to day and there are opportunities to practise the skills they have learned in writing in other subjects.
- Staff are enthusiastic and encouraging. They know pupils well and work hard to make sure that pupils receive a broad range of opportunities at school. For example, the school has invested in a new and attractive library and pupils appreciate the chance to borrow books which they might not otherwise see. This has resulted in pupils' increased enjoyment of reading books from a broad range of authors.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Although staff deal promptly with reported incidents of racist name-calling, pupils say that other incidents go unreported both by the victim and by other pupils. Pupils' understanding of this unacceptable behaviour and the use of derogatory language is not well enough developed to ensure that they work with staff to combat such actions.
- Pupils are not fully confident or clear about their learning and how they can improve. Procedures are in place to help pupils know what they need to learn next and what to do to make progress, although they are not always consistently applied.
- The recent focus of the school's work to develop pupils understanding of bullying has been on the use of technology. As a result, they have a better understanding of cyber-bullying and know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school and that there are trusted adults they can speak to if they need help. Disputes are resolved sensitively by supporting pupils to find solutions to the difficulty. When bullying occurs, staff deal with the issue promptly.

- The popular breakfast club provides a good start to the day. After eating, pupils are encouraged to take part in a range of activities which develop their social skills such as playing board games together or participating in different physical exercises.
- There are good opportunities to develop pupils' physical well-being. A range of after-school clubs such as dodge ball and multi-sports are increasingly popular. Healthy cooking classes are available to pupils and parents.
- Pupils' social and emotional needs are well-supported. Over a quarter of pupils attend 'workshop' and receive tailored help according to their need. Adults work with pupils and their families to help them overcome any difficulties they experience.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- The vast majority of pupils behave well but a small number who use derogatory racist language are not sufficiently checked.
- In school, pupils are polite and helpful. They open doors for adults and greet visitors cheerfully. They move around school in an orderly manner and are respectful. During less structured times such as lunchtime, pupils' behaviour is not always as good although staff deal with disputes well.
- The vast majority of pupils take pride in their school. The building is maintained to a very high standard and well cared for. Pupils work is attractively displayed and resources and equipment are of high quality.
- Learning proceeds uninterrupted most of the time. A small number of pupils sometimes disrupt the learning of others. When incidents occur they are swiftly and effectively dealt with so that learning can resume.
- Attendance has improved to close to the national average and the number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced as a result of effective work by staff.

### Outcomes for pupils

### require improvement

- As a result of inconsistent teaching across key stages 1 and 2, pupils' progress has remained variable. Too few pupils including the most able make consistently good progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Standards have risen in key stage 1 so that they are now similar to the national average because of improving rates of progress. However, work seen in pupils' books indicates that it is not yet consistently good.
- At the end of key stage 2, attainment remained below the national average in 2015. Evidence seen in pupils' books and on inspection indicates that at the end of key stage 2, in Year 6, pupils' progress is accelerating and more are working at the standard expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently, most are suitably prepared for the next stage of their education.
- The progress of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is variable. As a result of inconsistent teaching, the extra support to improve their reading, writing and mathematics is not always successful in ensuring that they make good progress.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium, like other pupils, make inconsistent progress. Although the gap in attainment between this group of pupils and others nationally closed at the end of key stage 1, at the end of key stage 2 pupils remained on average a year behind other pupils nationally.
- Most-able pupils' progress is not consistently good and as a result the proportion of pupils who reach standards above expectations remains below average.
- Standards in phonics at the end of Year 1 have risen because of effective teaching and are now above the national average.

### Early years provision

### is good

- From starting points that are typically below those expected, children make good gains through the early years so that proportions that have a good level of development and are ready for Year 1 are similar to the national average.
- Children settle quickly when they enter Nursery and form warm and trusting relationships. They learn rules and routines quickly in a secure and safe environment. They behave well and learn to play with each other, guided by enthusiastic adults.

- There are good opportunities for children to learn about keeping healthy. In Nursery, children clean their teeth daily and eat a healthy snack. They learn about germs and how to avoid spreading them.
- Adults support children to gain confidence in developing new skills such as using scissors or reading new words in well-structured sessions. Children learn to concentrate for increasing periods of time as sessions are gradually extended.
- A good range of resources and equipment both indoors and outdoors allow children to make choices about what they want to play with and maintain their interest.
- Sometimes adults do not challenge children sufficiently to think more deeply about what they are doing. Questions such as simple checks on number recognition are not demanding enough and result in one-word answers. At other times adults guide children too closely and do not encourage them to come up with their own solutions.
- Although assessments are accurate they are not always used well enough to plan for children's next steps in learning. Consequently, younger children in particular are sometimes asked to take part in activities which are not suitable for their stage of development.
- The early years leader is experienced and well organised. Regular team meetings provide staff with the opportunity to develop their teaching and consider children's learning and development. The early years leader supports less experienced staff to develop their skills well. The checks she makes help to develop the quality of resources and equipment. Good links with different agencies are used to support children's development.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	111633
<b>Local authority</b>	Middlesbrough
<b>Inspection number</b>	10011986

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	373
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cat Barnett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Wendy Nelson
<b>Telephone number</b>	01642 242309
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thorntreeschool.co.uk">www.thorntreeschool.co.uk</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:thorntree@mcschools.org.uk">thorntree@mcschools.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6–7 February 2014

## Information about this school

- Thorntree Primary School is a larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage and nearly all speak English as their home language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is over twice the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those supported through the pupil premium, is over three times the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after.
- The school runs a daily breakfast club which was inspected as part of this inspection.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2016 and the deputy headteacher joined the school in February 2016. Since the last inspection, nine teachers have left the school, six have been appointed and six have had extended periods of absence.
- The school is part of the Middlesbrough Co-operative Learning Trust.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and scrutinised pupils' work. Five of these activities were conducted jointly with either the headteacher or deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils to discuss their work and school life.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, newly qualified teachers, other staff, members of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed pupils moving around school and during breaks and lunchtime.
- Inspectors met parents informally at the beginning and end of the school day and they analysed the school's own survey of parents. There were insufficient responses to the online Ofsted questionnaire (Parent View) to consider.
- A range of school documentation including the school's view of its own performance, plans for improvement, attendance and safeguarding was scrutinised.
- The seven responses to the Ofsted questionnaire completed by staff were also considered.

## Inspection team

Susan Waugh, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
James Hannah	Ofsted Inspector
Catherine Morgan	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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