

Thurton Primary School

Ashby Road, Thurton, Norwich, NR14 6AT

Inspection dates 10–11 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher and the assistant headteacher are outstanding leaders. Their passion for high-quality teaching and relentless drive for all pupils to achieve the highest academic standards are shared by all staff.
- The governing body demonstrates consistently good practice in fulfilling its core functions and statutory duties and uses its excellent knowledge of the school astutely to shape its future.
- Teaching is never less than consistently good and much is outstanding.
- Pupils receive exceedingly useful feedback on how to improve their written work in English and mathematics. Teachers' marking in other subjects, such as geography for example, does not always explain how their geographical and technical skills are developing.
- Well-judged and often inspiring teaching promotes pupils' exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. Pupils love to learn. Their behaviour is outstanding, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Pupils say that they feel extremely safe in school and staff and parents agree with them.
- From their individual starting points children make excellent progress in their Reception Year. They acquire new skills quickly, especially in reading, writing and mathematics, and in their physical and personal development.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Their progress across a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics and science is rapid and sustained. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics have risen over time and gaps have closed in disadvantaged pupils' attainment compared to other pupils nationally.
- The very large majority of parents and carers are entirely satisfied with all that the school provides for their children and find staff approachable. A very small minority do not share the confidence of these parents in using the school's established systems to put forward their views or to raise concerns.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. This included 11 observations of parts of lessons (some seen together with the headteacher) taught by class teachers and teaching assistants.
- Inspectors examined pupils' written work, looked at examples of work on display and investigated the school's latest information about teaching and pupils' achievement.
- A few pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 read to inspectors and talked to them about their books. Inspectors also observed sessions where phonics (the sounds that letters make) were being taught.
- Meetings were held with pupils, key leaders and three members of the governing body. Inspectors talked to parents informally in the playground and met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents including information about pupils' attendance and behaviour, plans for future improvement, and self-evaluation.
- Policies and procedures for the safeguarding of pupils and arrangements for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs were examined. Arrangements for e-safety (keeping children safe online when using electronic media) were explored, as were those for safeguarding pupils during educational visits and residential trips.
- The views of the 53 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, along with results from the school's surveys of parents' views over the past three years.
- The responses received from 13 staff that completed Ofsted's staff questionnaire were analysed.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Kim Hall

Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British and very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium (additional government funding) provides support is below average.
- The mobility of pupils (the proportion who join or leave within the school year) is higher than average.
- Children in the early years attend full time.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 6.
- The headteacher is a local leader of education (LLE) and she provides support to other local schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Take further steps to improve communication with parents who find it difficult to put forward their views or to raise concerns.
- Ensure that teachers' marking of pupils' written work in subjects other than English, mathematics and science provides them with clear guidance in how to improve the skills that are specific to each subject.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher, ably supported by the assistant headteacher, has created a culture and ethos that is outstanding in the way that it focuses relentlessly on teaching and learning and strives for excellence now and in the future. She expertly communicates her profound and extensive knowledge of how children learn best and has developed a 'Team Thurton' spirit where staff and pupils work together harmoniously.
- The school has successfully completed its journey from good to outstanding and is still seeking to make improvements. For example, although the school fosters good relationships with most parents, staff are keen to improve their engagement with the few parents who find it difficult to approach them with concerns.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are very effective and adapt to change enthusiastically. They take the best from current national and local initiatives and statutory requirements, such as the introduction of the new National Curriculum, and mould them into existing excellent practice. Leaders of subjects never lose sight of Thurton's core values for every pupil to 'Enjoy, Achieve, Believe' when making changes.
- Immersed in a 'can-do culture', nothing is seen by pupils or teaching staff as a potential barrier to successful learning. This, together with the way the school tackles discrimination and promotes equality and inclusion, is the reason why all groups of pupils make remarkably good or outstanding progress year-on-year in a range of subjects. This includes pupils supported by the pupil premium, who benefit from the highly effective use of this additional funding.
- An excellent approach to managing teachers' performance through regular and rigorous quality assurance procedures underpins the consistently good and often outstanding teaching over time. Annual targets for improvement are closely linked to pupils' achievement.
- High-quality training for staff develops their professional skills continuously with all staff receiving regular in-school training, accessing courses provided by the local authority and attending national conferences. Thurton staff are up to date with developments in education and encouraged to gain further qualifications.
- The broad, balanced and superbly enriched curriculum is outstanding in promoting effective spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and provides valuable opportunities for pupils to experience life beyond Thurton. This ensures that pupils not only appreciate and understand fundamental British values – they live by them and develop an excellent understanding about life in modern Britain.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and leaders, managers and governors ensure that they are implemented rigorously. They check that e-safety has a high profile in everyday teaching. The quality of planning to reduce risk on educational trips and visits is exemplary, as is the immaculate record-keeping for all pupils with complex and extensive learning, emotional, health or behavioural needs.
- Additional funding for sport (the sports premium) is used very effectively and it has had a huge impact in expanding provision and increasing pupils' participation and achievement in a wide range of physical education and sports. Access to competitive events has been enhanced considerably through the premium with all Year 5 and 6 pupils and most Year 4 pupils taking part in competitive events last year.
- The local authority provides suitably light-touch support for the school. It recognises Thurton's excellent practice and uses it as a showcase for other schools to help them to improve teaching and learning in their schools. As an LLE, the headteacher supports other local schools to improve provision for learning. The local authority describes this outstanding school as 'inward looking and outward facing'.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors fulfil their core responsibilities and statutory duties very effectively. They have an in-depth understanding of their role, ensuring that while they keep a close eye on the school's work and hold

school leaders to account, they do not over-step their boundaries and interfere in the day-to-day running of the school. This has been pivotal in moving the school from good to outstanding.

- The governing body monitors teaching, pupils' achievement and financial arrangements rigorously. Governors ensure that decisions about teachers' salary progression are not automatic unless targets are met. Governors know what the school would do to tackle any underperformance.
- This forward-looking governing body is wisely planning to secure the school's future, ensuring that it remains viable and cost effective; and it is adamant that all options are explored fully before any decisions are taken.
- Governors are not reliant on the headteacher's information about the school to monitor its performance. They are confident in interpreting different types of data, and this enables them to challenge the headteacher and staff by asking searching questions.
- The governing body is extremely effective in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met including those for safeguarding pupils. It achieves excellent value for money and secures financial stability. This small village school has extensive provision to support pupils' learning and promote their enjoyment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding, enabling all pupils to learn without interruption or distraction. Not one correction from an adult or even a gentle reminder was seen to be necessary over the two-day inspection from Reception through to Year 6. The school's data and comments from staff, pupils, parents and governors provide evidence that this is the norm at Thurton.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and respectful and were extremely keen to talk to inspectors about their work and school life generally. They are exceedingly confident young people but at the same time they demonstrate humility and celebrate their own and each other's achievements with equal pride.
- All pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning and take pride in their work, as seen in the stunning displays of their work in classrooms and around the school. They have their own value statement 'doing my best, being my best and trying my best' which they live up to consistently. They show resilience in learning and are unafraid to make mistakes because they know that they will learn from them.
- Attendance is consistently above average and pupils are in school in good time for the start of morning lessons. Exclusions are extremely rare. There have been no discriminatory or racist comments or bullying incidents recorded for this school year because the pupils respect differences and are genuinely interested in them.
- The school's strong ethos, coupled with an excellent curriculum, ensure pupils' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A pupil who participated in a D-Day memorial service wrote 'I bowed my head in respect for the people who died... it was very touching for me.'

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Possible risk to pupils' safety is carefully assessed and documented with appropriate steps taken to offset hazards. Importantly, pupils are introduced to and educated in many aspects of life where possible dangers lurk, for example when they visit London and travel by train, bus or the underground.
- Pupils were adamant that bullying does not exist but they know about different types of bullying and exactly what to do if ever it should happen to them. Excellent relationships with adults give them confidence to share their concerns. Pupils were certain that no-one gets picked on or left out and that they are safe from any form of harassment or discrimination.
- Pupils' understanding of e-safety is well developed from an early age. Children in Reception using laptops, for example, told inspectors 'If someone asks for your name, you don't give it or your house number because they will know where you live.' Older pupils confirmed that 'Online safety is enjoyable because it is taught in a fun and memorable way.'

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The quality of teaching over time is consistently good and frequently outstanding as seen in the school's records of lesson observations, work in pupils' exercise books, data on pupils' progress and attainment, judgements of advisers and professionals external to the school, and in pupils' good or better progress in lessons.
- Teachers are extremely adept in planning work that meets pupils' needs, abilities and interests; they use their knowledge and records of pupils' previous learning advantageously. Where they detect that pupils have not grasped concepts they adjust the weekly planning accordingly or on the spot in lessons if necessary. The challenge for the least able is not too easy and the most able learners are fully stretched; all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in literacy, reading and mathematics.
- Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning, whether working one-to-one with individuals, in groups or in whole class sessions where they assist the teacher, by scribing for them for example, or in making notes of pupils' responses.
- Pupils receive extremely helpful guidance in how to improve their work in English, mathematics and science orally and in writing. They are given time to respond, to edit their work and, in doing so, they improve it. Even so, regular marking in other subjects (known in the school as topic work) does not always help pupils to know how well they are developing as geographers or historians, for example.
- Target sheets issued to pupils after each formal assessment period show them the progress that they have made thus far and what to aim for next in order to improve. Teachers expect pupils to demonstrate their literacy skills across the full range of subjects and provide plentiful opportunities for them to write for a wide range of purposes and audiences.
- Staff provide an attractive and aesthetically pleasing environment that inspires pupils. Classrooms and corridors are full of high-quality displays of their work and digital images that celebrate their achievements publicly.
- Teachers use the outdoors creatively to promote learning. They develop pupils' understanding of environmental issues in the 'forest school area', use the special story-telling chair to develop their performing skills and further their spiritual development through spending time in the reflective garden.
- The school's chosen approaches and teaching methods work excellently in keeping pupils' learning fresh so that they are fully engaged. Not only does the school nurture pupils' intellect and academic prowess, the outstanding teaching also develops the whole child through sport, visual and performing arts, design technology and cooking food.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. Individual starting points for Reception-aged children vary widely from year to year. On entry, individual children have skills that are below, similar to or above those typical for their age. Importantly, whatever their starting points, they make good or outstanding progress especially in reading, writing and mathematics.
- When they move into Year 1 girls and boys rapidly build on their knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) already established in Reception. Pupils sound and blend unfamiliar words quickly and build words using phonics to help them to spell new words in their writing. Consequently, when their phonic knowledge is checked in Year 1, results soar high above the national figure.
- Pupils of all ages read widely and often. They develop a love for reading, using the two libraries frequently to choose stories to read as well as bringing their favourite books into school from home. Year 1 pupils read with expression using appropriate intonation to show their understanding. Their skills exceeded requirements for Year 1 pupils.

- Year 6 pupils showed a passion for reading fiction, non-fiction and digital texts. They recommend authors when the school is buying new stock and are inspired to write their own stories from the range of genres they read. A group of boys, for example, wrote an excellent quest story then used a laptop to put it on a slide-show presentation for others to try. They achieved this because their skills in reading and writing were advanced and combined with extremely well-developed computing skills.
- With small numbers of pupils in each year group, national data about pupils' attainment are not always reliable and can fluctuate widely from year to year depending on the individual needs of pupils in each year group. Nonetheless, the school prides itself that pupils' attainment over time has risen. In 2014, all Year 6 pupils reached the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and half of the year group exceeded expectations to reach the higher Level 5 in the national tests. In science, the very large majority of pupils in Year 6 are meeting the requirements for the age group and a third are exceeding them.
- Disadvantaged pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make excellent progress compared to others nationally. The gap between their attainment and all other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally, has narrowed year on year. In 2014, the gap closed entirely in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good or outstanding progress because the school meets their needs completely, as do pupils who speak English as an additional language. Parents of pupils with complex needs spoke highly of the progress their children make.
- The most able pupils relish a challenge and make good or better progress that is sustained over time, as seen in their written work. The percentage of pupils making expected progress, whose prior attainment aged seven years was high, exceeds national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Leadership of the early years is outstanding and provides clear direction to ensure that the quality of teaching is at least consistently good. All adults are alert to when children need a further challenge or when their learning falters.
- Record keeping of children's achievement over time is comprehensive and used to plan high-quality experiences across all areas of learning. The early years leader makes sure that information about children's learning is accurate. She leads moderation sessions with other schools in the local authority where early years professionals check each other's assessments to ensure their accuracy.
- Children's interests are carefully considered in planning rich, varied and memorable experiences for them. Provision for role play is extensive and immerses children into a world of make-believe. Children constructed a 'caravan' with crates, for example, washed it with water, hung out the clothes and then talked about where they were going on holiday.
- The early years leader uses and analyses data about children's learning expertly to determine where changes in the curriculum are needed. For example, in 2014, the proportion of girls that reached a good level of development was above the national figure while that of boys was below. This year there is a clear focus on boys' learning and they are making excellent progress, learning with high levels of engagement and enjoyment.
- Records show that boys and girls in Reception this year, including disabled or disadvantaged children and those who have special educational needs, are making exceptionally good progress from their individual starting points.
- All of the statutory requirements for children's health, welfare and safety are met through effective arrangements and policies. Risks are assessed carefully with a full daily safety check.
- Children are exceptionally well behaved. They listen to instructions and follow them carefully. They have high levels of self-control and get along with one another extremely well.

- Parents are kept informed about their children’s learning. The ‘special books’ used to collect their work and capture special moments with digital images provide an outstanding record of their children’s achievements for parents to see.

- At the start of each day children come into school smiling with a spring in their step because they enjoy it so much. They develop as keen, happy and confident learners who are well prepared for the move into Year 1 next year. Provision in the early years makes an outstanding contribution to their excellent physical, emotional health and well-being, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	121063
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	461406

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	89
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maggie Coe
Headteacher	Cassandra Williams
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2011
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