

Thurcroft Infant School

Locksley Drive, Thurcroft, Rotherham, South Yorkshire, S66 9NT

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2014

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.

- Outstanding care, support and guidance create a harmonious and exceptionally safe atmosphere within the school, allowing all pupils to flourish.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and are supportive of its work.
- Governors are knowledgeable about the school's strengths and share a commitment for continuous improvement. As a result, outcomes for all pupils are improving strongly.
- Uniqueness in the approach to teaching has undoubtedly been central to the outstanding improvements seen in pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Although pupils have opportunities to carry out investigations, very occasionally these tasks do not provide sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils.
- Additional adults provide effective and timely support that addresses individual learning needs well.
- Amongst all staff there is a shared desire and commitment to improve the life chances of all pupils by raising aspirations and developing confident lifelong learners.
- High expectations and appropriate support enable disabled pupils, and those who have special educational needs, to make exceptional progress from their starting points.
- The headteacher is tireless in her commitment to provide the very best learning experience for all pupils in her care, and has nurtured the same commitment from all staff.
- Outstanding leadership has resulted in improvements to the quality of teaching and pupil achievement, which are now outstanding
- Checks undertaken by leaders on the quality of teaching and learning within the school are thorough and involve all stakeholders. This leads to accurate self-evaluation and school-improvement priorities.
- The school makes strong partnerships with schools and other agencies to enhance its work.
- The curriculum is lively and engaging and links subjects together within relevant contexts. It offers many opportunities for pupils to find out new things and to develop basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Assessment procedures are thorough and detailed, and are used well to inform planning and to identify pupils in need of extra support.
- Marking of work is regularly undertaken, but occasionally does not provide pupils with the next steps in their learning.
- Pupils work harmoniously together and are respectful of each other, staff and visitors, creating an excellent climate for learning.
- Pupils for whom additional funding applies make outstanding progress. Any gaps that exist are closing rapidly as a result of leaders' actions.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed pupils' learning in twenty lessons and part-lessons, several of which were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- In addition, the inspection team looked at examples of pupils' work in folders and books and listened to pupils read.
- There were meetings with groups of pupils; the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the Local Authority.
- The inspection team took account of 15 responses to the online questionnaire, (Parent View) and considered recent questionnaires undertaken by the school. They also considered responses to twenty-two staff questionnaires.
- The inspection team examined the school's own information on pupils' recent and current progress; the schools' evaluation of how well it is doing and its records of monitoring the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

Diane Buckle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Pamela Hemphill

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thurcroft Infant and Nursery School is smaller than average, but has steadily increased in size over the last three years.
- The very large majority of pupils is of white British heritage.
- The percentage of disadvantaged pupils who are supported through pupil premium has increased over three years to be above the national average and accounts for almost half of the pupils in the school. The pupil premium provides additional funding for disadvantaged pupils and pupils looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have disabilities or special educational needs has reduced over the last three years to be below the national average.
- A children's centre operates from the school site. This provision is subject to separate inspection arrangements and the report is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The school has won a Parent's Charter Award for its work in developing parent and pupil voice.
- The Early Years Unit comprises a nursery class (Foundation 1) and 3 reception classes (Foundation 2).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To accelerate even faster the progress of the most able by:
 - using even more complex investigations to further challenge and probe pupils' thinking
 - making sure that the marking of pupils' work consistently provides the next steps for learning and that pupils are given time to respond to their teacher's prompts.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher offers inspirational leadership. She places pupils at the heart of all decision-making and has nurtured a staff team that shares the same determination and commitment to raise standards and the aspirations of all pupils. This results in pupils who are confident learners, who love finding things out and who are proud of their own and each other's achievements.
- The headteacher is highly effective at managing the performance of teachers and support staff, all of whom say they feel very well supported and encouraged. All staff are given access to high quality training opportunities to improve their teaching successfully. The appraisal system is used well to determine pay progression.
- Senior and middle leaders operate with a similar passion to provide the very best learning experiences for pupils. All leaders have an accurate view of what is working well to secure pupil progress, improve attendance and manage behaviour and where further improvements need to be made. They produce highly effective and thoughtful plans that are evaluated well. Middle leaders in particular have developed highly engaging curriculum plans and approaches to assessment without levels.
- Pupil premium funding has been spent wisely in providing additional adults to support pupils within the classroom and within small, focused teaching groups. This has contributed significantly to narrowing the gaps in achievement seen upon entry into school.
- Much thought has been given to developing the school curriculum, which excites and engages all pupils. It makes relevant links between subjects to provide a purposeful context in which pupils learn. It uses information and communication technology (ICT) to underpin a plethora of practical activities that promotes the core skills of reading, writing and mathematics well. In doing so, it gives pupils a thirst for knowledge. This was expressed well by a Year 2 boy who, when asked what he likes most about his school, answered: "School is great you learn something new every day".
- The curriculum is also used well to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In a Year 1 lesson, pupils watched in amazement as a computerised magic pen created a real-life rocket. Such engaging contexts inspire pupils and result in sustained attention and outstanding achievement. Links to other schools with culturally diverse populations and an established international partner school in Gambia have supported pupils' awareness and understanding of those with lives different from their own and prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders have carefully explored options for developing assessment without levels and have adopted a model to improve its use of descriptors to define learning. This is being used exceptionally well by staff to identify pupils in need of additional support and to determine which elements of the new curriculum need further coverage.
- Parents are wholly supportive of the school and value the care and guidance provided for both themselves and their children.
- The Local Authority views Thurcroft Infant School as an outstanding, self-supporting and autonomous school, and consequently it has not found it necessary to offer more than minimal support.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding meet all statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know their school well and have a thorough understanding of the quality of teaching across the school and how well pupils achieve, compared with other pupils nationally. They are committed to placing the school firmly at the heart of the community. They set high expectations for all pupils and challenge the work of the school appropriately. They are outward facing, always looking for new ways of working to ensure that they achieve best value and are determined to narrow any gaps in achievement. They are fully involved in the appropriation of additional spending for disadvantaged pupils and additional sport funding and know well the impact these additional spends have had in improving outcomes in achievement and the quality of teaching.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. From a very young age pupils demonstrate respect for each other and make sensible choices that make the school such a happy place.
- All pupils follow school rules and conduct themselves well in and out of the classroom, which means that no time is lost and lessons start on time.

- Playtimes are purposeful, with pupils engaged in lots of fun activities that are supervised and supported well.
- Behaviour within the classroom is exemplary. All pupils display a thirst and excitement for learning and work harmoniously together. Pupils are very proud of their achievements, which are celebrated widely. For example, a Reception pupil proudly declared, "I've written a sentence!" to the immense joy of both teacher and other pupils.
- The attendance of pupils has improved dramatically and is now in line with national averages. Staff work hard with other agencies to secure further improvements for individual pupils.
- The school keeps detailed behaviour logs that are well organised and show few serious incidents. When they do occur, they are dealt with swiftly and appropriately and relevant agencies informed.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- The school is a very safe environment and staff work hard to ensure that pupils learn how to manage their own safety.
- A well-defined programme of personal and social development ensures that pupils receive appropriate support to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils have a mature understanding of bullying and know when it is important to tell an adult, which is a support in which they have great confidence. Pupils are adamant that bullying does not occur in their school and records viewed would confirm this.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe on the Internet and particularly about the protection of their identity. Pupils had designed posters to this effect.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching is never less than good and is frequently outstanding.
- There is uniqueness and consistency to teaching across the school that focuses upon securing basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics and positively promotes collaborative learning. This leads to confident learners, well equipped for the next stage in their education.
- Teachers work hard to make lessons interesting and instil a love of learning in their pupils. This contributes well to the outstanding results pupils achieve by the time they leave the school.
- All staff use resources well to support learning; pupils in Year 2 were using oversized magnifying glasses to look for missing capital letters in each other's work. This simple resource enabled a boy to exclaim "Miss she missed a capital M for Mary".
- Reading is encouraged across the school. Any pupil who is not heard to read at home receives daily opportunities to read with an adult in school. Pupils demonstrate excellent attitudes to reading and all pupils love to read.
- The teaching of phonics is outstanding and pupils' use of the sounds letters make is applied well by all pupils to help them read and spell unfamiliar words.
- Writing and mathematics are taught equally effectively and teachers work hard to provide relevant contexts to support the understanding and application of skills.
- Pupils are encouraged to assess the quality of their own work and that of others. They do this confidently and with accuracy. They are able to articulate their successes and identify areas for further improvement.
- Homework is appropriate to the age and abilities of the pupils in the school. It includes a mixture of daily reading and number tasks and extended projects supported weekly by teachers.
- Teachers mark work regularly and celebrate pupils' successes, but not all marking consistently helps pupils to know how to improve their work. There are few opportunities for pupils to respond to these prompts.
- Teachers plan highly structured lessons that have clear learning intentions and that build sequentially upon pupils' prior learning. All pupils are provided with opportunities to investigate, although very occasionally these do not provide sufficient challenge for the most-able pupils.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- The standards that pupils reach at the end of Year 2 have improved year on year. Almost all pupils make outstanding progress from their various starting points, to reach standards that are better than those seen

nationally in reading, writing and mathematics.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make rates of progress similar and sometimes better than those of their peers. They are set the same aspirational targets as other pupils have and supported effectively to attain them.
- Those pupils in receipt of additional funding make outstanding progress from their respective starting points and better progress than their counterparts nationally. Where gaps exist within school, these are closing rapidly and at a faster rate, because of targeted intervention and rigorous monitoring.
- The most-able pupils attain very well compared with pupils nationally, but could progress at an even faster rate, if they were given even more opportunities to complete challenging investigations.
- Standards in phonics continue to improve and outcomes are higher than national ones. This is because of the highly structured and consistent approach to teaching. As a result, pupils go on to be confident readers who love books.
- Pupils have high expectation of themselves and are keen to improve further. All pupils know what they need to do to improve.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The leader of the Early Years has a positive impact upon the standards reached by children when they leave Reception class. She is supported well by an equally able staff, who immerse children in a wonderfully vibrant and engaging environment, where routines are quickly established. Outstanding leadership and management result in confident children who are able to manage their own behaviour and reach standards above those seen nationally. The vast majority makes rapid progress from the low starting points.
- Children enter school with an understanding of letters and numbers which is slightly below that expected. Their skills in working and playing together and making relationships are well below those expected. By the end of Reception, almost all children have made rapid progress and are well placed for learning in Year 1. They make particularly impressive gains in their social and emotional development.
- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Children learn rapidly to take turns and share. Their confidence in using language is enhanced by opportunities to be engrossed in imaginative play. Particularly joyful were the boys in Reception class, who were pretending to be "Percy the Park Keeper."
- There are opportunities for children to sustain concentration as they are given stimulating tasks. One child was supported by an adult to complete an embroidery task as part of the Parents' Art day.
- Well-defined attainment on entry determines where provision needs to be shaped to best meet the needs and interests of all children within the setting.
- Strong links with parents and the onsite children's centre ensure that all children settle quickly into the setting and receive the most appropriate provision.
- As a result of this highly effective provision and well-tailored and timely support, children learn to care for each other and make safe choices. They learn how to be kind and be good friends and as a result, they learn to manage their own safety.

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	106898
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	448336

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	229
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Cathryn Walker
Headteacher	Tracy Harper
Date of previous school inspection	26 January 2010
Telephone number	01709 542538
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