

Thriplow CofE VA Primary School

School Lane, Thriplow, Royston, SG8 7RH

Inspection dates 25–26 April 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and governors have managed difficulties caused by staff absence well. They have successfully eradicated inadequate teaching and reversed the decline in standards and rates of progress which occurred in 2012, particularly in mathematics.
- Because of the action taken by leaders, teaching is now good and some is outstanding. Leaders, including governors ensure that the quality of teaching is continuing to improve.
- Pupils make outstanding progress in their Reception Year and good progress in all other year groups in all subjects, including mathematics.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved because the school has adopted new ways of teaching mental mathematics and of teaching a variety of ways to carry out calculations.
- The family atmosphere of the school is highly valued by pupils, who say they know each other and the adults in school well and feel very safe.
- Pupils' behaviour in and around the school and their attitudes to learning are outstanding.
- Pupils show a mature understanding of each others' needs. They are highly reflective and caring because the school places a strong emphasis on the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers' marking and their use of targets do not sufficiently inform pupils how to improve their work and take the next steps in their learning.
- Although pupils are encouraged to share their ideas, they do not have the opportunity to review each other's work, and so reflect on and improve their own work as well as that of their peers.
- Monitoring by the headteacher and other leaders, although regular, is not sufficiently systematic to bring about outstanding teaching.
- Teachers do not have the opportunity to observe the best practice which is taking place in the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons, all of which were joint observations with the headteacher. In addition the inspector made a number of shorter visits to other lessons in each class.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, representatives from the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school development plan, data regarding pupils' current progress, planning and monitoring information on school performance, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- The inspector met parents informally at the start and end of the school day. She took into account the responses to a recent school survey and the 32 responses from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

Inspection team

Heather Weston, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding for pupils eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and from service families) is well below average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported through school action, as well as those supported at school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs, are average.
- The numbers of pupils in each year group are very small. This can lead to wide variations in results.
- There were not enough pupils included in the national progress data in 2012 to judge whether the school met the government's current floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The school has four classes, all of which are for pupils of mixed ages.
- The school has had a new headteacher since the last inspection, who has been in post for two and a half years. In the last 18 months there has been a high proportion of staff absence.
- A higher proportion of pupils than in schools nationally leave or join the school at times other than the start of their Reception Year, particularly at the end of Year 2.
- The governing body manages an on-site after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to outstanding by:
 - drawing up a regular and rigorous programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and checking that teachers follow the advice given to improve their teaching
 - providing opportunities for teachers to share the best practice in the school
 - improving the focus of pupil targets so that pupils know how to make the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring that teachers' marking comments show pupils how to improve their work, where appropriate in relation to their targets, and that teachers always make sure that pupils follow the advice they are given in their marking
 - giving pupils opportunities to review the work of others and so improve their own work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children join the Reception class with attainment which is wide-ranging but overall is just above that typical for their age. They make outstanding progress and enter Year 1 with above average attainment.
- The results of the recent screening check for Year 1 pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds made by letters) were higher than those reached by pupils nationally.
- Standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 have been well above average for two years because pupils are taught well and make good progress.
- Having been well above average, the standards reached by pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2012 showed a sharp fall from 2011. Rates of progress required improvement, particularly for girls and pupils with special educational needs.
- Evidence from lessons, pupils' work and the school's information relating to pupils' progress show that pupils through the school from Year 1 to Year 6 are now making good progress and standards are again above average. Any pupils who had fallen behind as a result of inadequate teaching have been supported well and many are now making rapid progress. So too, pupils who join the school at all stages are welcomed by other pupils and by staff and are given the help they need to settle into the school quickly and make the same level of good progress.
- Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs also make good progress due to well planned provision and careful monitoring of their progress.
- Through the school, from the Reception year to Year 6, pupils entitled to the pupil premium make good progress and the school has effectively narrowed the gap between these pupils and all pupils in the school. There were not enough pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in 2012 to comment on their attainment.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching observed during the inspection was good and some was outstanding. Good teaching was reflected in pupils' work and in the school's own pupil progress data. In the Reception Year pupils' outstanding progress is the result of carefully planned activities, high aspirations and outstanding teaching.
- Teachers' questioning is skilful. Teachers give pupils opportunities to discuss their ideas with each other, to give detailed answers and to explain their reasoning. This helps pupils to deepen their understanding of what they are learning.
- Teachers plan lessons which are well matched to pupils' abilities and provide activities which extend their learning. Lessons interest pupils. Many are focused on developing key skills in reading, writing and mathematics either in specific English or mathematics lessons or in other subjects across the curriculum.
- The teaching of mathematics promotes pupils' thinking skills. The recent focus on improving pupils' mental mathematics has improved pupils' ability to solve problems. Teachers value pupils'

explanations and invite them to verbally share their 'top tips' of methods for working out problems with each other. This helps to develop a strong culture of shared learning between pupils.

- Literacy skills are taught well. For example, pupils are encouraged to look at different writing styles and write from different people's perspectives. In one lesson for pupils in the Year 1 and 2 class, for example, pupils retold the story of the Great Fire of London from different viewpoints whilst in the Year 5 and 6 class pupils reviewed the work of Lewis Carroll in order to write their own account using his complex sentence structure.
- Teachers build on pupils' good early reading skills by encouraging them to read and discuss a range of texts.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and provide a high level of challenge. For example one Year 2 pupil's work showed that she had been challenged to include an advanced level of punctuation in her writing.
- Although some teachers' marking helps pupils to improve their work, the quality of marking and the use of targets across the school do not sufficiently help pupils improve their work and take the next steps in their learning. In addition, pupils have too little opportunity to review and assess each others' work and so reflect on and improve their own work.
- Support from teachers and teaching assistants in class, small groups or individually for pupils eligible for the pupil premium, pupils with barriers to learning, pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs is good and enables pupils to make good progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils are polite, respectful and show strong degree of care for each other. They say that they love coming to school and appreciate the tangible 'family feel' in the school. This view was endorsed by discussions with parents, who feel that the ethos of the school contributes strongly to their children's personal development.
- In all classes, pupils show a very positive attitude to learning. They are highly motivated and want to do their best. This is despite the changes in teachers experienced by some pupils as a result of staff absence.
- Pupils show a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber- and homophobic bullying. All those spoken to stated that there is no bullying in the school, just some falling out, which is quickly and easily sorted out by pupils themselves or by adults in school.
- Regular attendance is promoted and celebrated by the school. Because of this and because of pupils' enjoyment of school, attendance is above average.
- Teachers manage behaviour well, including the behaviour of those pupils with particular needs.
- The school provides a safe, extremely attractive and well-cared for environment. All aspects of safeguarding meet requirements, and a high level of care is provided for pupils.
- Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated by any member of the school community. Pupils as well as adults value and have a mature understanding of others.

- Pupils gain from, and enjoy the activities provided by the after-school club.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, with good support from the governing body, has taken decisive action to make sure that there is no weak teaching and has managed a high level of staff absence. She has established a high level of morale and confidence amongst staff.
- Performance management is linked appropriately to pupils' results. The headteacher, other leaders and governors monitor pupils' progress and attainment effectively and have a tightly prioritised development plan. Pupils' progress is checked and formally discussed every half term. Greater rigour has been given to this process this year. Teachers know that they are accountable for pupils' progress, and all pupils in danger of falling behind are given the support they need to enable them to catch up.
- Developments to improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, have led to improved progress in all subjects. However, the school has no written programme for monitoring the quality of teaching or an established cycle of following up key points for improvement. Also, whilst the advice given to teachers does help to improve their teaching, it is not recorded and the process is not sufficiently robust to bring about consistently outstanding teaching. Opportunities are not provided for staff to learn from the best practice in the school.
- The school works hard to develop relationships with parents. Parents appreciate this and say they know that any concerns they may have can be raised with teachers or the headteacher, and that their concerns will be considered.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well. All groups of pupils, including those whose circumstances could cause barriers to their learning, make good progress. Pupils who join the school at all stages are welcomed by other pupils and by staff and are given the help they need to settle into the school quickly and make the same level of good progress.
- The school provides a good curriculum and many exciting and stimulating experiences for pupils, to widen their knowledge, stimulate their interest in learning and further their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Theme days and weeks such as 'Evacuation Day' and 'Victorian School' provide pupils' throughout school with first hand experiences which promote the development of a range of skills, including information and communication technology.
- The local authority has given good support to the school, particularly with improving the teaching of mathematics.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors check the work of the school and review the school's pupil progress data. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Governors, together with the headteacher, have made good strategic decisions in managing the difficulties caused by staff absence and by the action taken to eradicate inadequate teaching. Governors challenge leaders and, as a result, both the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement are improving. The governing body manages the performance of the headteacher and staff. Systems are in place for the approval of pay awards so that these are always tied to how well staff help pupils to achieve. Governors have managed the challenges of a reducing budget well and have ensured that the school budget is spent appropriately to promote pupils' achievement, including pupil premium funding.

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	110835
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	412512

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	90
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dale Coss
Headteacher	Victoria Penty
Date of previous school inspection	12 November 2008
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