

Thornhill Primary School

Ehen Road, Thornhill, Egremont, Cumbria, CA22 2SJ

Inspection dates 30 September–1 October 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The personalised attention from the caring staff is highly valued by pupils and their families.
- Children settle well into the early years and are keen to be punctual at the start of the school day.
- Whatever their individual starting points, most pupils make good progress throughout their time at school.
- Most disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs usually make progress at rates similar to their peers.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers and teaching assistants work very well together to provide a good level of support to pupils with any additional needs.
- Pupils are polite and well behaved in lessons, around school and at playtimes. They settle quickly to their work and enjoy their learning.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They learn how to keep safe in their local community and other environments.
- The headteacher has the full confidence of staff and governors. Together, they are a strong team who share the ambition to provide the best for every pupil.
- School leaders, including governors, have secured improvements in the achievement of all groups of pupils and in the quality of teaching. The school continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always make the same rate of progress in writing as they do in other subjects, particularly in Key Stage 1. Some written work contains too many spelling errors.
- Pupils do not consistently respond to teachers' marking so that they learn from their errors.
- Pupils' reading records do not always show how well pupils are reading both in school and at home.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching in six lessons, one of which was observed jointly with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made a number of short visits to lessons and listened to pupils read.
- Discussions were held with: school staff; groups of pupils; the headteacher; governors; parents and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including safeguarding documents, the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its own performance, its development plans, records of pupils' standards and progress, documents relating to attendance and behaviour, and pupils' work in their books.
- There were not enough parental responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to generate a report. The school's recent parental and pupil surveys were considered by the inspector. Four responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Naomi Taylor, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thornhill is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is much higher than that found nationally. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs supported through school action is much higher than that found nationally.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than that found nationally.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- All pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- A very small minority of pupils are on dual roll at the West Lakes Learning Centre.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been some key changes in staffing. A new headteacher was appointed in 2011. She also took on the role of executive headteacher at Arlecdon Primary School in January 2014.
- In this very small school, there are too few pupils to report on school performance against the government's floor standards for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further in order to raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing in Key Stage 1, by:
 - embedding the school's recent focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar and encouraging pupils to check the accuracy of their written work, especially their spelling, across all subjects
 - ensuring pupils respond to teachers' marking and learn from their mistakes
 - improving the use of learning journals in the early years and reading records in Key Stages 1 and 2, so that pupils, parents and staff are better informed of the progress being made at home and school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly ambitious for the school and is committed to providing the best possible learning experience for all pupils. Since her appointment, she has gained the full support of staff and governors. She has led the successful implementation of strategies to improve learning and teaching, including the appointment of new staff to the school. For example, a new specialist mathematics teacher and a new English specialist have allowed pupils in Key Stage 2 to be taught separately for literacy and numeracy, which has accelerated their progress. This demonstrates that the school is well placed to continue to improve.
- The headteacher successfully addressed a dip in standards in 2011 and as a result, there has been a steady rise in standards. The appointment of a proactive pupil premium coordinator has seen a rapid close in the gap between disadvantaged pupils and non-disadvantaged pupils by the time they leave school.
- Priorities are clearly stated in the school's improvement plan and self-evaluation is both realistic and rigorous. This is because school leaders effectively check on the quality of learning and teaching in the school and have a clear view of how they can continue to raise standards.
- Teachers are well supported to improve the quality of their teaching, particularly through staff appraisal and the training they receive. Middle leaders are growing in confidence and developing their skills in checking on the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in their areas of responsibility.
- The progress that pupils make is carefully tracked against the targets set for them. Any differences in the progress of the different groups of pupils are effectively closed as they progress through the school. Pupils with additional needs, including the most and least able, are now identified quickly and supported through intervention activities that are closely matched to learning needs.
- The school curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. It is made more exciting by the range of trips and visitors to school that provide pupils with memorable experiences. The curriculum promotes well pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and prepares them effectively for life in modern Britain.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school in managing arrangements for the headteacher to also become executive headteacher of Arlecdon Primary School.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are highly committed to and supportive of the school. They attend training so that they have the knowledge and skills needed to hold school leaders to account for standards at the school. The governing body has an accurate view of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching because governors receive comprehensive reports from the headteacher and leaders which they question and challenge. Governors check that systems to manage staff performance are implemented and that teachers' pay reflects how effective they are. They were extremely thorough in measuring the pros and cons before allowing the headteacher to become the executive headteacher of another school. They ensure that the pupil premium funding is used to support those pupils for whom it is intended and that spending has a positive impact on eligible pupils. Governors make sure that statutory requirements are met, pupils and staff are kept safe and the budget is spent wisely.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- In lessons and around the school, pupils are courteous towards each other and the adults around them. They look smart in their uniforms and enjoy learning and playing within the vibrant surroundings that the school provides.
- All parents who spoke to the inspector felt behaviour was generally good. This is reflected in the recent school survey. Pupils also share this view.
- Older pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities such as listening to younger pupils read on a Friday afternoon. They act as good role models and this helps them to grow in confidence.
- A small minority of pupils exhibit challenging behaviour from time to time but mentoring provides strong support to help and encourage pupils to choose appropriate behaviour.
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because, although pupils mostly have good attitudes towards their learning, there are a few occasions when activities do not challenge them appropriately and some pupils become distracted from their learning.

- Attendance is good and improving, as is punctuality.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils feel safe because they know that the adults in school care for them well. They also know that they have to be very careful when they use the internet.
- Pupils understand bullying in its different forms. They are confident that there is very little bullying at their school and say that when it does take place it is dealt with quickly.
- When pupils go on trips and residential visits, the staff encourage them to analyse the potential risks and how to keep themselves safe. Pupils talked animatedly about trips to outdoor centres and to York; experiences which clearly broaden their horizons.
- The primary school sport funding is used to broaden sporting opportunities for pupils, while developing the expertise of staff using specialist coaches. This has, for example, led to increased opportunities in activities such as archery, judo and multi-skills courses. As a result, more pupils are taking part in a wider range of sporting activities to help them stay healthy and promote their well-being.

The quality of teaching is good

- Pupils make good progress because the quality of the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics is good across the school. This is confirmed by a range of evidence, both in and out of lessons.
- Most pupils are clear about what they have to do because teachers explain carefully what they expect pupils to achieve. Pupils are also encouraged to share their ideas and learn from each other.
- A whole-school approach to teaching spelling, punctuation and grammar has proved highly effective in raising standards in these areas. Opportunities for writing are stimulated by trips. While pupils enjoy writing at length, they do not have well-developed skills in checking their own work for errors, particularly spelling mistakes, before it is marked.
- There is now a whole-school approach to teaching mathematics, which has resulted in accelerating pupils' progress. Whenever possible, numeracy work is linked to real-life situations. For example, when pupils were rounding up or down to the nearest pound, they were encouraged to think about how this would help them to estimate the total cost of items when shopping. This engaged pupils fully in their learning.
- Phonics is taught effectively at a brisk pace. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage clearly enjoy learning new letters and combinations of letters and the sounds they make. Pupils enjoy stories and like to read. Those who read to the inspector demonstrated how they blend letters and the sounds they make to work out unfamiliar words. However, across the school, some pupils' planners lack detail to help inform parents and staff how well and the amount that pupils are reading both at home and at school.
- Nurture groups help to build the confidence of pupils and raise their aspirations. One pupil, who had previously been a reluctant learner, told the inspector how much he was looking forward to secondary school and that he would probably continue his education in the sixth form.
- Teachers mark pupils' books regularly and provide good written advice to pupils on how to improve their work. However, pupils do not consistently correct and revise their work to help them learn from their mistakes.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together as a team to provide a good level of support for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, the most able, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Following a good start in the early years, pupils are well prepared for learning in Key Stage 1.
- In the Year 1 reading screening check, most pupils usually achieve the expected level. This is because teachers and teaching assistants are competent in the teaching of phonics (matching letters to the sounds that they make). Those pupils who struggle to read are given effective support and this leads, in most cases, to rapid improvements.
- Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now broadly average by the end of Year 2. However, too few reach the higher levels in writing. Nevertheless, this reflects good progress given these pupils' starting points in the early years.
- The school has recovered from a dip in standards in 2011. As a result of more consistently good teaching

throughout Key Stage 2, most pupils leave school at least at the standards expected and in 2014, half of the pupils reached the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion reaching the higher level in spelling, punctuation and grammar was well above average.

- Good support from teachers, teaching assistants and external agencies helps disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress. Their different needs are quickly identified and appropriate support is swiftly put into place to enable each of them to make good progress in reaching their challenging targets.
- The very small minority who attend the West Lakes Learning Centre are growing in their social and emotional development. This experience helps support pupils as they prepare to embark on the next stage in their education.
- The significant proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding, including those known to be eligible for free school meals, achieve in line with their peers. They are now attaining as well as non-disadvantaged pupils in the school and nationally, in reading, writing and mathematics by the time they leave Year 6.
- The most able pupils are effectively challenged to aim high. Those pupils with exceptional talents are provided for well by the school. For example, some are taught with older pupils for certain subjects and achieve well in mathematics and reading. This ensures these pupils make the same good progress as other groups and demonstrates the school's commitment to equal opportunities for all.

The early years provision is good

- Links between school, home and the on-site nursery are strong. This helps pupils to settle quickly into school routines.
- For a small minority, getting to school late has been an issue but a new rewards system now sees children very keen to arrive punctually to school. A chart in the entrance to Class 1 shows that almost all children are achieving their goal of always arriving on time and that their attendance is good.
- Most children start school with skills and knowledge that are significantly lower than those typical for their age. This is particularly so in social and emotional development and with their speech and language. Several children are supported by external agencies to meet their individual needs.
- Communication with parents is important to staff. Parents are able to speak with staff at the start and end of each day so that everyone can share any relevant information. Staff provide advice to parents on how to continue to teach their children at home but not all parents attend these sessions and so supporting learning beyond school is weaker for some children.
- The 'learning journals', which are records of a child's achievements during the early years, are informative for parents and staff. Parents are encouraged to contribute to them by sharing the milestones children achieve at home but some parents do not regularly share this information. Learning journals build a good picture of each individual child and are well used by teachers to help them to plan activities that support children to make good progress.
- The early years is stimulating both indoors and out. The outdoor area for the Reception Year children covers all of the seven areas of learning well and really helps to develop children's physical skills.
- The early years is well led and managed with a strong team approach by staff who quickly get to know the children and build activities around their interests.
- Good teaching results in children being supported to make good progress, particularly with their speaking and listening skills. However, because starting points are significantly lower than those typically expected, the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is currently lower than the national figure.

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	112165
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	448438

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	42
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Curwen
Headteacher	Wendy Figes
Date of previous school inspection	29 September 2009
Telephone number	01946 820402
Fax number	01946 820402
Email address	office@thornhill.cumbria.sch.uk

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