

# Inspection of Thornhill Primary School

Thornhill Gardens, Shildon, County Durham DL4 1ES

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Inspection dates: 2 and 3 February 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Outstanding**

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The quality of education

**Outstanding**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Outstanding**

Personal development

**Outstanding**

Leadership and management

**Outstanding**

Early years provision

**Outstanding**

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

In the school motto, 'A promise for the future', leaders set out their ambitious aim for pupils to leave Thornhill ready for the next chapter of their life. Leaders have very high expectations for all pupils both academically and socially, no matter what their background. Pupils blossom in this inspirational school. Pupils enjoy learning and make excellent progress.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. From the early years, pupils learn a strong moral code and take responsibility for their actions. Pupils are kind and considerate to one another. They feel safe and happy in school. Bullying is rare. Pupils know that adults listen to their concerns and will help them. Pupils also learn how to resolve any minor concerns themselves.

Pupils love the forest school, the wide range of after-school clubs and the educational visits. Many pupils have leadership roles, and run active campaigns which benefit all. Recently, they helped in creating the 'Thornhill Terrace', a new garden area in school.

The early years environment is a vibrant and dynamic place to be. Staff actively encourage children to communicate and share with each other. Children eagerly learn a nursery rhyme a week, and take delight in acting these out.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders have implemented a highly ambitious curriculum to ensure that they meet the needs of the local community. The curriculum design includes repetition of specific content, such as study of the Romans in history. Year on year, pupils examine subjects in greater depth. As a result, pupils have excellent recall of their learning.

Teachers use assessment skilfully to check what pupils know and can do. Teachers are responsive to pupils' needs and are adept at correcting any misconceptions that pupils have. The curriculum content inspires pupils to learn more and to be proud of their local area. Pupils are hugely enthusiastic about their studies, particularly when learning about Shildon's industrial heritage.

Pupils adore reading. They have a wide variety of high-quality books to choose from, including books from different cultures. Leaders ensure that there is a structured approach to teaching pupils to read, from the Reception Year onwards. Children in the Nursery benefit from a special programme in which they learn the pre-skills for reading. Pupils focus well on their learning, making rapid progress from their starting points. By the end of key stage 2, pupils read fluently and accurately. They are well prepared for the next phase of their education.

Children in the early years flourish. They are visibly happy. Leaders create a learning environment which is inviting and well designed to support children in their

development. A bespoke movement programme is in place to prepare children for writing. Staff encourage children to develop their own ideas, such as exploring magnetism. Children revel in practical investigations, such as finding out how polar bears keep warm. Adults consistently model excellent communication and language skills. Children communicate exceptionally well for their age. Children develop positive attitudes to learning which continue throughout school.

Leaders have highly effective systems to identify pupils who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers use a wide range of strategies to support pupils with SEND in accessing learning. These include additional prompts such as step-by-step instructions. Provision is seamless; all pupils work alongside each other. Pupils with SEND are fully included in the wider life of the school.

Pupils have high expectations of their own behaviour. There is a collective understanding that everyone comes to school to learn. There is no low-level disruption in class. All pupils benefit from physical education every day. Pupils enjoy this burst of activity. They are used to this routine, and settle back to their other studies very quickly. Following the pandemic restrictions, pupils' attendance is improving. Leaders work with families to highlight the importance of coming to school.

There is an impressive personal development programme. Leaders promote positive mental health. Pupils have an excellent understanding of protected characteristics and fundamental British values. Leaders ensure after-school clubs build on pupils' unique talents. Many attend sports clubs. The school's brass band is renowned in the region and has performed at the Sage Gateshead concert hall. Pupils are active citizens in the wider community. They meet with councillors and those who run local businesses. Pupils grow in confidence in their various leadership roles.

Governors know the school well. They support and challenge leaders to fulfil their roles effectively. All staff are proud to work at the school. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the provision for their children.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders, including members of the governing body, have undertaken a wide range of training in safeguarding matters. They ensure that staff can recognise any signs of abuse and neglect. There are clear systems in place for reporting welfare concerns.

Leaders work effectively with a range of professionals, to make sure that pupils and their families get help if they need it. They have trialled specific therapeutic programmes that involve parents working with their own child.

Pupils learn how to identify risks both online and offline. Rail safety is a current priority, given the close proximity to new railway lines.

### **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

### **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	114106
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10229036
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	207
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Dave Thompson
<b>Headteacher</b>	S Overfield
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thornhill.durham.sch.uk">www.thornhill.durham.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	24 June 2008

## Information about this school

- The headteacher commenced their post in September 2021.
- There have been changes to the leadership team; however, all senior leaders have worked at the school for a considerable period of time.
- The school does not use any alternative education provision for pupils.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, other senior leaders and the special educational needs coordinator. Inspectors met with the early years leader, subject leaders, class teachers and pupils. Further meetings were held with early career teachers and some support staff.

- The lead inspector met with representatives of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into reading, mathematics, science and history. For each deep dive, inspectors looked at curriculum planning, conducted joint lesson visits with leaders, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at books and samples of work.
- Prior to the inspection, the lead inspector reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school, including at lunchtime. They spoke with pupils about their views of the school and their learning, behaviour and safety.
- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke to staff, parents and governors. A range of safeguarding information was scrutinised, including the school's policies and records. Inspectors spoke to pupils and observed relationships between pupils and adults. The lead inspector also met with the designated safeguarding lead.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their views of the school. As well as speaking to parents at the school gate, inspectors considered responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Staff's views were taken into account through a number of meetings as well as through their responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

### **Inspection team**

Mary Cook, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Jessica McKay

His Majesty's Inspector

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