

Thornford Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Boot Lane, Thornford, Sherborne, DT9 6QY

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2014

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Thornford is exceptionally good at meeting the needs of all pupils who attend. Consequently, pupils achieve exceptionally well. By the end of Year 6 attainment is higher than in most schools.
- The excellent education is the result of the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. He is given extremely strong support by staff and governors. All are committed to maintaining pupils' exceptional achievement.
- Leaders and governors ensure that teaching is consistently outstanding. This is due to the excellent support and staff development provided.
- The school cares for pupils exceptionally well. Safeguarding procedures are highly effective. Consequently pupils are rightly confident in their safety in school.
- The support for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. As a result, pupils' behaviour and relationships with teachers and other pupils are outstanding. Their attitudes to learning are excellent.
- There are excellent systems in place for checking the school's work. Outstanding development planning means that any weaker aspect is very speedily identified and addressed. The school is exceptionally well placed to maintain its high-quality education.
- The curriculum is especially well planned to help pupils acquire important skills and knowledge. It also takes full account of their interests, needs and talents.
- Governors are fully involved in all aspects of the school's work and hold the headteacher and staff to account exceptionally well for pupils' performance.
- The school has an excellent partnership with parents and carers. This allows staff and parents and carers to work especially well together to support pupils.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed eight lessons or parts of lessons jointly with the headteacher. In addition the inspector made a number of other short visits to group activities, heard a sample of pupils read and scrutinised pupils' written work.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff, including senior and middle managers, and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector took account of the 30 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and spoke to small number of parents and carers bringing their children to school. Responses from 11 staff questionnaires were analysed.
- The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's records on current pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance. Documents relating to planning and monitoring and safeguarding were also looked at.

Inspection team

Diane Wilkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thornford is a much smaller than average-sized primary school. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes.
- There has been a change of headteacher and the appointment of a new deputy headteacher since the last inspection.
- The proportions of pupils with special educational needs supported by school action and school action plus or a statement of special educational needs are above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average and very few speak English as an additional language.
- At the time of the inspection no pupils were known to be in receipt of the pupil premium funding, which provides funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's floor standards in English and mathematics, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.
- The headteacher and other members of staff work closely with other local schools in supporting each other in a range of monitoring and development work.
- The school provides a breakfast club for pupils, which was also inspected.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the opportunities for pupils to use their mathematics skills in a wider range of subjects and situations in order to further increase the proportion of pupils exceeding the levels expected for their age in mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- On entering Reception, children's skills are usually at the level expected for this age although lower in writing. The school's own very comprehensive and accurate assessment data indicate that, from their starting points, pupils make excellent progress. By Year 6, pupils reach at least the levels expected and an increasing proportion exceeds them.
- A strong emphasis on basic literacy and numeracy skills helps most reception children to write correctly in sentences and do simple calculations. By the end of the year, a much greater proportion than is seen nationally achieve a good level of development.
- Year 1 phonics screening check results have varied due to differing prior attainment. Excellent progress ensures that by the end of Year 2, attainment in reading is above average
- The attainment of Year 6 pupils' in reading is high. Their exceptionally well-developed reading ability supports their learning in a wide range of subjects. For example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 showed great skill at analysing and comparing the imagery in two William Blake poems.
- The key priority of raising the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing over the last two years has been very successful. By Year 6, virtually all pupils complete very well-organised writing tasks, using sophisticated punctuation and paragraphing to very good effect. Their attainment is well above average.

- High expectations of the presentation of work have resulted in excellent handwriting and recording of number work. Pupils' neatly set out mathematical work helps them to calculate accurately. By Year 2, pupils are already confident mathematicians, applying their skills highly effectively when working with measures or data.
- By Year 6, attainment is above average in mathematics and rising rapidly. The increasing emphasis in applying their mathematical skills in a wide range of tasks, including in other subjects, is already helping to raise the proportion of middle-attaining pupils exceeding the levels expected for their age.
- Exceptional achievement was also observed in other subjects; for example, pupils in Years 5 and 6 designed an excellent film trailer using information and communication technology (ICT).
- Excellent commitment to equality of opportunity is very evident. There is high-quality in-class support and special programmes. These help disabled pupils, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language to catch up. They achieve as well as their classmates, most reaching the expected Level 4 by Year 6.
- Higher-attaining pupils are challenged especially well and consistently exceed the levels expected for their age.
- There have been no pupils in receipt of pupil premium funding during the past two years. Past assessment data indicate that, previously, these pupils achieved similarly to their peers in both mathematics and English.
- Pupils and their parents and carers value the many opportunities for physical education and sport that they are confident help support pupils' well-being.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The school capitalises especially well on its small size with each member of staff knowing all pupils exceptionally well, allowing learning to be especially well tailored to their needs. This helps ensure that teaching, including that in literacy and mathematics, is consistently outstanding.
- Staff plan highly challenging tasks that ensure pupils make the very best progress they can. For example, in an excellent lesson for those in Years 1 and 2, pupils used 100ml scales to weigh accurately and precisely.
- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils ensure behaviour management is outstanding so not a minute is wasted during lessons. Teachers and teaching assistants are constantly vigilant, supporting pupils who need extra help and moving on those who have learnt quickly.
- Teachers intuitively know which style of learning gets the best out of pupils in different situations. They are especially good at using different strategies to help pupils learn effectively. In a Year 3/4 science lesson, a mixture of explanation, demonstration, questioning and discussion helped pupils develop excellent investigation skills.
- Teachers involve pupils highly effectively in helping to plan and assess their own learning. This has enabled an increasing number to exceed the expected Level 4.
- Very well-qualified teaching assistants support learning exceptionally well, both in class activities and in special groups to help those pupils at risk of underachieving catch up. Equally good attention is given to stretching the most able pupils through specialised tasks. As a result there is an increasing number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 on track to reach Level 6 in the national tests.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. Together with their excellent attitudes, this makes a significant contribution to their learning. The school's Gold Charter: 'Treat others how you would like to be treated', is reinforced exceptionally well. Attendance is above average.
- Lessons are rarely interrupted by poor behaviour. The school works highly effectively with families to address any behaviour issues that may arise.

- Excellent relationships are fostered between pupils and with staff. Older pupils are exceptionally good at looking after the younger ones, for example as playground leaders. They often devise their own games, as was observed in the very well-run breakfast club.
- Very strong links with the local church and community help ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength. Pupils' contribution to school life, for example as school councillors or eco-monitors, is exemplary.
- By Year 6, pupils are very mature, thoughtful and polite young people. They are exceptionally well prepared for secondary school and life in a diverse and global society. This is reinforced through their links with schools in London, France and India.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. There are excellent procedures in place to prevent any bullying or racial incidents. This ensures there is no discrimination in any form.
- Pupils report that bullying of any kind is not tolerated. On the small number of occasions when it does occur it is always speedily and successfully addressed. There have been no racial incidents in recent years. Pupils have total confidence that they can approach any member of staff if they have any safety concerns.
- Pupils' very good awareness of how to keep safe is evident in careful cycling on the roads, and their knowledge of how to avoid risks when using the internet.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school benefits considerably from the excellent leadership of its headteacher. The staff and governing body are fully committed to ensuring the school maintains its outstanding effectiveness. A key factor is the caring family ethos they create, which allows pupils to thrive.
- Outstanding teamwork helps ensure a fully coherent approach to pupils' learning. There is very effective sharing of expertise across staff.
- There is excellent monitoring and support of teaching. This involves lesson observations, very regular analysis of pupils' progress and recorded work, and pupil consultations undertaken by both staff and governors.
- Performance management targets are highly challenging and especially well linked to school development planning. As a result they have a very positive effect on improving pupils' progress.
- The excellent curriculum takes full account of the skills and knowledge pupils are required to learn and is organised in a way that fully capitalises on the needs, talents and interests of each class. The programme for pupils' personal, social and health education is outstanding.
- Exceptionally strong relationships with other schools and organisations in the area have very positive benefits across all areas of the school's work, most notably in sharing skills across a group of local schools.
- Safeguarding arrangements fully meet requirements and the policies and procedures, including those for child protection and the vetting of staff, are of very high quality.
- The relationships between staff, governors and parents and carers are excellent. Parents and carers are very well informed about and supported to help their child's education. As an outstanding school, Thornford receives minimum support from the local authority, but values its contribution, where available, to the moderation of pupils' progress and performance management.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The excellent governing body provides very good support to the school and is very well informed regarding teaching quality and how well pupils achieve. This helps governors to play a very effective role in formal performance management procedures. Governors make very regular visits during the school day, not only as part of their monitoring activities but also to support activities such as reading or religious education lessons. Pupils and staff benefit considerably from governors' expertise, for example, in finance and safeguarding. Statutory duties are fulfilled to a high standard, including for the allocation and monitoring of pupil premium funding when appropriate and in the allocation of sports funding, which is used

effectively to widen and extend pupils' experiences and increase staff expertise.

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	113816
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	441232

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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	99
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Derrick
Headteacher	Ian Bartle
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2007
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