

Thorner's Church of England School, Litton Cheney

Litton Cheney, Dorchester, Dorset, DT2 9AU

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2015

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 headteacher's drive and rigorous approach to improving the school are improving teaching and driving up standards.
- Teaching is consistently good or better over time, enabling all pupils to make faster progress and reach a higher standard in their work.
- Children make good progress in all year groups and it is accelerated in Years 5 and 6. This has ensured that standards are above average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and pupils enjoy coming to school. They are courteous, well mannered and work well in lessons.
- Pupils are looked after well and they feel safe.
- Governors provide good support and challenge and are very committed to the school.
- The early years provision is effective and children make good progress as a result of good teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Progress in writing in Key Stage 1 is less rapid because harder tasks are not always set to challenge the most able pupils.
- On a few occasions, marking does not clearly tell pupils how they can improve their work and so not all pupils have the benefit of learning from their mistakes.
- Children in the early years do not have a wide enough range of opportunities to develop their creative, expressive arts and design skills.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed all the teachers in the school. Lessons and part lessons were observed.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other teachers and a number of governors. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority. Discussions were held with pupils from all classes during the inspection and the inspector heard pupils read in Year 2 and Year 6.
- A range of school documentation was considered, including procedures for safeguarding pupils, the school improvement plan and current data showing the progress of pupils.
- Samples of pupils' work and records were examined.
- The inspector took account of the views of 30 parents and carers who contributed to the online Parent View survey, and discussions were held with some parents before school started.

Inspection team

Stephen Bywater, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- A smaller than average proportion of pupils is supported by the pupil premium. This is additional funding for those pupils eligible for free school meals and children in the care of the local authority. In 2014, no pupils in Year 6 received this funding.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is also below the national average. The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- An above-average proportion of pupils transfer in or out of the school part way through their primary education.
- There were too few pupils in Year 6 in 2014 to make valid comparisons with the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- Children in the early years are taught full time in a Reception class that shares the same indoor and outdoor learning areas with a pre-school group which is not owned, managed or led by the school.
- The school holds a breakfast club on two days each week.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it is typically outstanding by ensuring that:
 - tasks always provide an appropriate level of challenge for the most able pupils in Key Stage 1 writing.
 - marking always tells pupils clearly how they can improve their work so that they all have the benefit of learning from their mistakes
 - children in the early years have more opportunities and a wider range of activities and experiences for developing their expressive arts and design skills through design and technology, art, music dance and role play.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is relentless in her drive for improvement and is passionate for all pupils to achieve well. This drive is raising standards and improving teaching. Together with an ambitious staff, she is determined to pursue excellence in everything the school does to support pupils' learning and progress.
- All staff and the vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire on Parent View and all those spoken to by the inspector are very satisfied with the school's work. Their views can be summed up by one parent who said, 'Thorner's is a wonderful, gentle and inclusive school where the kids clearly love to learn.'
- Teaching is managed well. Regular checks on the quality of teaching, by senior and middle leaders are effective in making clear to staff what their strengths are and how they can improve further.
- Highly effective procedures closely link pupils' performance with teachers' salary increases.
- There are good procedures for checking on the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Leaders and managers, including subject leaders, use this information skilfully to eliminate any dips in pupils' performance and sustain high achievement. Support is very quickly put in place if any individual is not making better than the expected progress from their starting points.
- Leaders use some of the pupil premium funding to maintain small class sizes, employ extra staff and implement individual support with reading, writing and mathematics. They closely monitor the value added to these pupils' education and this ensures that money is used effectively..
- The curriculum ensures that pupils make rapid progress in developing the essential skills of reading, writing and mathematics so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education. There is a wealth of after-school clubs, which pupils enjoy very much, including archery, tennis, sailing and a wide range of competitive team sports.
- Additional sport funding has been spent wisely to increase teachers' expertise and to provide pupils with opportunities to take part in a wide range of physical activities. It also helps to support the maintenance of the school's swimming pool.
- The curriculum provides ample opportunities for pupils to excel in music and the performing arts. During the inspection, pupils playing guitars and violins were accompanying the hymn during assembly and singing beautifully. These experiences contribute to pupils' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are many trips and outings locally and further afield. These enable pupils to contribute to the local community and learn from the wider environment. The promotion of British values, such as democracy, care for others and equality of opportunity, is a very positive features of the school. Leaders do not tolerate discrimination and successfully create an ethos where relationships can flourish.
- The school has benefited from the growing relationships with other local schools. Staff have been able to share expertise and this has helped to quickly improve the quality of teaching and develop the skills and expertise of middle leaders.
- This is a small school and because of the strength of the leadership team , the local authority has not had to provide significant support to the school.
- Safeguarding policies and procedures meet requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are actively involved in all aspects of school life and visit the school regularly to check on the progress pupils are making. They have a thorough understanding of performance data and keep themselves fully informed about pupils' progress and attainment.
 - Governors take a special interest in the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and liaise regularly with the highly effective special educational needs leader. They also meet with other leaders to check on the impact of the spending of the pupil premium funding. Consequently, they are fully aware that pupils eligible for such funding are making the same good progress as others in the school. Governors have a thorough understanding of how additional funding for sports is used and the impact it has. Pupils are enjoying their participation in a wide range of activities and competitive sports.
 - Governors know the school exceptionally well, including how good teaching is. They ask leaders searching questions about all aspects of performance and make sure that staff only receive financial reward if they meet their targets in relation to pupils' progress.
 - Governors are very proud to serve the school and have ambitious plans for its future development.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff set high standards and pupils respond well.
- Pupils and staff show high levels of respect for each other. This ensures a happy, welcoming and harmonious school where pupils enjoy learning. In the words of one pupil, 'It's such a friendly place to be and we have great facilities.'
- Behaviour is good, both in and out of lessons, because the school promotes pupils' personal development exceptionally well throughout its curriculum.
- Pupils are pleasant, very polite and well mannered. They welcome visitors warmly to the school, open doors for them and are delighted to show them their work.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's 'Golden Rules' to manage behaviour. They very much appreciate the rewards they receive.
- Pupils value the opportunities they have to take responsibility, including acting as school councillors, play leaders and being members of the eco club.
- They move around the school sensibly and show pride and care for their school environment.
- Parents are very positive about pupils' behaviour. They say that their children feel particularly safe in school and that they are cared for well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and know how to manage unsafe situations.
- Pupils are cared for very well and there is effective support for their families. This has ensured that pupils' attendance has improved over time and is now above average.
- Pupils also have regular updates on how to stay safe on the internet. There are regular visits to the local secondary school and visitors to school who talk to them about keeping safe.
- Pupils have a strong awareness of the dangers of bullying and of how bullying can be stopped. They know about internet safety, cyber bullying and also bullying based on prejudice. Their view is that bullying is rare and that, if it occurs, it is dealt with immediately.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching over time is good and staff are ambitious for pupils to do their very best. This is reflected in the challenge seen, for most pupils throughout the school though slightly less evident in Key Stage 1 writing.
- The daily phonics (the sounds that letters make) sessions in Key Stage 1 are having a significant impact on pupils' reading and writing skills. Pupils in Key Stage 1 read with interest and expression. By the end of Year 2, most pupils are reading confidently and fluently.
- However, in Key Stage 1, work in pupils' books and the checks that the school carries out show that, on occasions, expectations of the most able pupils in writing are not high enough. As a result, a few higher attaining pupils are not consistently reaching a high enough standard in their work. Work in books typically shows that pupils do not always produce sufficient writing.
- Where pupils are challenged to write and are highly engaged, they make typically good or outstanding progress. For example, in a Years 5/6 writing lesson, pupils were keen to write using metaphors and personification to describe settings and atmosphere. One pupil's writing was especially descriptive. 'The sun glared down at me with the salty sea stinging my eyes.' The work was exciting and all pupils rose to the high level of challenge.
- Pupils typically respond well to the preciseness of teachers' questioning that makes them think more. This was seen when a pupil wrote, 'A glowing, green flame flickering in the fire.'
- In mathematics, the teaching is good and is sharply focused on problem solving. Teachers and teaching assistants offer practical support in correcting misconceptions and enabling pupils to complete the activities.
- Most marking is effective and helps pupils to understand their mistakes and make faster progress. However, on a small number of occasions, marking does not clearly tell pupils how they can improve their work, and so not all pupils have the benefit of learning from their mistakes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils' progress is good. Standards vary year by year, due to the small numbers in the year groups and the fact that more pupils than normal transfer in and out of the school.
- Throughout the school, pupils make good progress in reading. Younger readers show interest and enthusiasm for books. They select their texts carefully and talk meaningfully about what they read. Reading skills are promoted well. Pupils of all ages speak enthusiastically about the books and authors they enjoy when reading in school and at home.
- Improvements in pupils' writing are particularly evident in Key Stage 2 where pupils have extensive opportunities to write at length across a range of subjects.
- In Key Stage 1, standards continue to rise and progress is good, especially in reading and mathematics.
- The good progress continues across Key Stage 2 where the proportion of pupils making better than expected progress is increasing. They make accelerated progress in Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. This year, pupils are on track to exceed the standards expected when they leave school and they will be well prepared for their transfer to secondary school.
- The progress pupils make in mathematics is good. This is as a result of teachers planning effective opportunities for pupils to work on tasks which challenge their thinking.
- The most able pupils are usually challenged well in all aspects of their learning. They thrive on doing harder work. They are highly motivated to do their very best because of the teachers' high expectations and their own delight in seeing how well they can do. However, progress in writing in Key Stage 1 is less rapid because tasks set do not always sufficiently challenge the most able pupils to work at higher levels.
- The small number of pupils eligible for the pupil premium typically make good progress across the school, particularly at Key Stage 2.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their individual starting points. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' needs and provide learning tasks that get the best out of them. These pupils are fully integrated into school life where they make progress similar to that of other pupils nationally.

The early years provision is good

- Children enter the Reception class with skills that are broadly in line with those typical for their age, although this masks variations between individuals. They make good progress and all children are currently on track to reach a good level of development.
- Leadership of the early years is good and there is a high priority given to keeping children safe. Adults provide good role models for the children and, in response, the children behave well.
- Teaching in the early years is good. Children get a good grounding, especially in developing their reading, writing, phonic knowledge and mathematical skills and understanding. This prepares them well for Key Stage 1. The school's impressive outdoor environment and the teacher's planning provide excellent opportunities for children to experience nature and gain a good level of development of the world around them.
- However, children's expressive arts and design skills do not develop as rapidly as their other skills. This is because the early years base is currently not providing an interesting and exciting environment and the resources and activities to promote their expressive arts and design skills are not always suitable for all children. There are only limited opportunities for children to represent their own ideas, thoughts and feelings through design and technology, art, music, dance, role play and stories.
- Relationships between staff and children are strong and parents are overwhelmingly positive of the children's good start in the school. Staff work hard to involve parents in their child's education.

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	113804
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	448667

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	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Janet Jackson
Headteacher	Jyotsna Chaffey
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2013
Telephone number	01308 482410
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