

Thorpe Hesley Primary School

Upper Wortley Road, Thorpe Hesley, Rotherham, South Yorkshire S61 2PL

Inspection dates

13–14 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Leaders have worked as a united team to create an exceptional, stimulating and purposeful learning environment for all pupils. Leaders' ambition to create a primary school to be proud of through the amalgamation of the infant and junior school has been realised.
- Pupils' progress has accelerated considerably across all year groups this year. From broadly typical starting points, pupils make great gains in their learning, particularly in mathematics, where a high proportion of pupils reach higher standards. Leaders agree that more pupils need to achieve higher standards in writing.
- A dynamic curriculum gives pupils opportunities to shine and make strong progress across a wide range of subjects. Pupils flourish and leave school very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Staff are highly motivated and have strong subject knowledge. Their excellent teaching and high expectations have a direct impact on strong outcomes for pupils.
- The governing body gives tenacious support and challenge to leaders. Governors know the school well and make frequent checks on the effectiveness of leaders' work to improve pupils' outcomes. Governors take time and care to celebrate pupils' achievements and make sure that they communicate well with parents.
- Children get a fabulous start to school life in the early years. An extremely stimulating, highly organised environment, rich with learning opportunities for all children, supports them in making strong progress.
- Pupils' outcomes in phonics have risen considerably due to a consistent, engaging approach from all staff.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well catered for. The team around these pupils provides care, support and guidance that are first class. As a result, these pupils make strong progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is excellent. Their attitudes to learning and the pride they take in their work are exemplary.
- Parents are highly supportive and positive about the school. Effective communication means that they know what their children are learning and that they are making excellent progress. Most importantly, they say, their children are very happy.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well. Pupils are reflective, know about different cultures and are developing attitudes and values that will support them well in becoming good citizens.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further develop pupils' writing skills as they progress through school to ensure that more reach the higher standards by:
 - continuing work recently started to improve pupils' spellings, making sure that older pupils apply these consistently in their written work
 - developing pupils' understanding and use of ambitious vocabulary.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The school saying, 'Thorpe Hesley, the best school in Rotherham and indeed the world', recited by staff, pupils and parents, has become the mantra for consistently high expectations in everything that the school does. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, very ably supported by knowledgeable, ambitious senior and middle leaders, have successfully created an inspiring environment for all.
- All leaders bring different skills to the team, which, combined, result in highly effective direction to staff for school improvement. Leaders were disappointed by the 2016 results but they quickly rallied to thoroughly analyse reasons for any aspects of underperformance and have rigorously tackled them. As a result, attainment and progress have improved across the school substantially.
- While close attention has been paid to improving pupils' outcomes in English and mathematics, it is leaders' focus on improving pupils' outcomes across a broad and balanced curriculum that is exceptional. On entering either of the two school buildings, there is immediately a taste of the high-quality curriculum on offer to pupils. Attractive displays celebrate the depth and detail of pupils' learning across topics and subjects.
- Care and attention are paid to ensuring that the same high quality pupils give to their work is also given to how their work is celebrated. Within topics, pupils have the chance to explore, develop and investigate across a wide range of activities. For example, Year 4 work about the Titanic included debating who was at fault for the disaster, writing newspaper articles and postcards, creating high-quality pencil drawings and mapping the ship's journey. Pupils retain the information and skills they learn because of the creative and motivating ways teachers deliver lessons. Pupils talk confidently about their learning through topics, not only this year, but in previous years.
- Leaders use the primary school physical education and sport funding well to improve teachers' skills and to give pupils wider opportunities locally in a number of different sporting activities. For example, this year, pupils have celebrated success in events such as the Year 3 and Year 4 cross-country, where boys and girls made it to the South Yorkshire finals. In football, the school team was delighted to be crowned Rotherham champions.
- Meticulous attention has been given to ensuring that the curriculum takes particular account of any pupils who may have barriers to their learning. A knowledgeable team of leaders, teachers and support staff works tirelessly to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged make the very best progress they can. The effective identification processes, assessments and resulting programmes of work are helping pupils make great gains in their learning. Most disadvantaged pupils have caught up, or are catching up, with other pupils nationally. Funding is targeted well to ensure that both these groups of pupils make strong progress from their starting points.

Governance of the school

- Governors have an accurate view of the school because of the extensive checks they make on the effectiveness of leaders' work. They seek external validation of this information through local authority partners and consultants. They are outward looking and constantly seeking to further develop their own knowledge and skills so that they can provide top-notch challenge and support to leaders. For example, they recently requested an external review of their work to check what elements of their work could be improved further.
- Governors demonstrate the same passion and enthusiasm for their roles as school leaders. They are dedicated to ensuring that there is excellent communication with the school community. An aspect of their work that they value highly is attending special assemblies to reward and celebrate pupils' great behaviour and achievement, with awards such as the Governor Good Citizen Award and the Governor Academic Award. Governors make sure that they are readily available to parents. They seek parents' feedback about strengths and concerns, or aspects of the school's work that parents think could be better.
- An ambitious plan is in place to check aspects of leaders' work across the year. A variety of leaders and staff are invited to meetings of the governing body to present evidence of the impact of their work.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders are constantly refining systems and procedures to ensure that safeguarding is firmly understood by everyone. Leaders say that new electronic systems, introduced this year, have improved the efficiency in checking any concerns even further. Staff receive regular updates and training about how to keep pupils safe.
- Effective systems are in place for checking on the attendance of pupils who attend alternative provisions throughout the week and for any pupils who may potentially have been missing education.
- There are good links with external agencies when needed and leaders are confident in the partnered response around pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- There is a tangible feeling that teachers and teaching assistants love their jobs. They combine strong subject knowledge and a clear understanding of pupils' needs with effective, creative strategies to engage and motivate pupils. As a result, pupils of all abilities develop a thirst for learning, are highly engaged in their lessons and make strong progress across subjects.

- Leaders' focused direction to staff on the application of skills in mathematics has had a very positive impact on pupils' outcomes. Throughout the week, pupils of all abilities have numerous opportunities to test out and apply the mathematical skills they have learned. The 'mission impossible' challenges are a highlight of the week. Pupils work together to solve problems, giving clear reasons for their choices and testing out their theories. They say that the adults only give them hints when the task is proving really tricky. Teachers and teaching assistants support tasks effectively by asking key questions that keep the learning moving forwards. Consequently, pupils, including those who are the most able, make very strong progress. A large proportion of pupils reach higher standards in mathematics.
- Learning and practising spellings are fun. Teachers and teaching assistants use innovative and creative ways to help pupils to get better at their spellings. Each week, everyone takes part in a number of different, carefully targeted activities, which are having an impact on improving pupils' spelling. For example, younger pupils chalk spellings on the playground, write words in shaving foam on the tables and play quick knock-out team games. Leaders agree that older pupils still need further support to apply the spellings they have learned more consistently to their written work.
- Teaching assistants support pupils well in their emotional and academic needs. The very effective communication between the team of staff means that there is a clear understanding of what individual pupils and groups of pupils need to do next to improve. Teaching assistants use effective questioning and modelling to encourage pupils to have a go at tasks. They intervene appropriately and guide the learning when pupils need further help.
- Successful routines in phonics lessons are engaging, active and embedded. Teachers and teaching assistants model sounds effectively and address any misconceptions pupils may have quickly. Pupils enjoy their learning in phonics, in the classroom and outdoors, and apply these skills confidently in their work across the curriculum.
- Pre-learning activities, where pupils get the chance to have 'a sneaky peek' at a task, give them the opportunity to have a go at some activities before they are introduced in the classroom. This builds pupils' confidence and supports them in being more successful when they tackle the task back in the classroom.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils is impressive. Leaders have put in place a range of provision and stepped responses to support the progress pupils are making. Every opportunity is taken to ensure that teachers and teaching assistants are fully equipped to support pupils well in making accelerated progress. Leaders and staff know that making good progress is not enough to help them catch up, and are aspirational in their targets for these pupils to make excellent progress. The high-quality support received 'on the ground' in the classroom helps these pupils make rapid gains in their learning.
- Teachers' creative and innovative approaches to the curriculum mean that pupils cannot wait to get started on a new topic. They learn in depth about a wide range of subjects. Their extensive work in geography, for example, learning about a country in detail each year, is supporting them in developing a great understanding of the world. One class, eager to share their learning about Japan, shared facts that they had learned about koi carp and gave a wonderful rendition of 'Twinkle, twinkle, little star' in Japanese.

- The school's curriculum is often used as a springboard for a wide range of different reading and writing activities. Pupils show motivation and enjoyment in sharing texts and writing diaries, newspaper articles, postcards, stories and poems. Leaders agree that including higher quality vocabulary choices will improve pupils' work further.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils and staff make sure that the sense of community extends outside the school. Pupils are regularly involved in events in the local church and have taken part in a number of activities to support local charities.
- School council members know the importance of their role. They are excellent ambassadors for the school and are proud of the improvements they help make. They support other pupils in resolving minor problems and listen carefully to how pupils feel about their school. For example, they have successfully introduced a 'noiseometer' to help reduce the sound level in the dining hall. They have also worked with leaders to produce a child-friendly anti-bullying policy.
- The school operates two breakfast clubs, for pupil groups of different ages, which are very popular. Pupils say that this gets their day off to a great start. They can play games such as chess with friends, or sit quietly in the 'chilling corner'. They have the option of a hot or cold breakfast and know how to make healthy choices.
- Staff know how important it is to address current affairs issues and support pupils' conversations about difficulties in the world. For example, after recent incidents in Manchester, pupils had the opportunity to discuss their thoughts in conversations that were age appropriate.
- The curriculum is designed around giving pupils the chance to achieve their very best through engaging and memorable experiences and learning. Pupils are very proud of their school and speak with animation and dedication when asked about it, and about their learning and their teachers. One child said, 'My teacher likes me for being me.'
- When pupils talk about keeping safe, they mention first the safe environment created by the care of adults. Vulnerable pupils speak movingly about how staff help them overcome any challenges with behaviour or medical needs that they may face. Pupils have many opportunities to learn about e-safety. Older pupils spoke confidently about their lessons about peer pressure, crime and independence out in the community.
- Healthy eating is strongly promoted. Pupils say that they can choose from the salad bar each day for school lunch and that dinner staff encourage them to try new things.
- Pupils are clear that bullying is extremely rare, and that most problems are about falling out rather than bullying. They are confident that adults will help them to sort any problems out.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils know the importance of learning. They are eager to please leaders and their teachers and demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning in the classroom. The oldest pupils, who finished school to make the transition to their secondary schools on the last day of the inspection, continued to exemplify these very positive attitudes throughout their thoughtful tasks in lessons and their celebratory assemblies.
- Behaviour at less structured times, such as the move between lessons and playtime is just as positive. Pupils know how to maintain fantastic behaviour independently and conduct themselves sensibly, whether adults are nearby or not.
- Pupils' attendance has been in line with or better than that of pupils nationally over the past few years. Leaders deal with any persistent absence effectively. The low level of persistent absence has reduced overall this year. Leaders liaise effectively with the staff in the alternative provision that some pupils attend throughout the week. They check that the pupils are in school and safe, and making good progress.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- From broadly typical starting points in the early years, the progress pupils make through school shows considerable improvement this year. Pupils' current work shows that they have made excellent progress across the curriculum throughout school.
- Systematic and consistent teaching in phonics has resulted in a much higher proportion of pupils gaining the provisional expected standard in the 2017 Year 1 phonics check. This is well above the provisional national figure.
- Focused work on applying skills learned has resulted in pupils of all abilities making much stronger progress in mathematics. The proportion of pupils working at higher standards shows particular improvement and is well above that seen nationally.
- In 2016, pupils' attainment at the end of key stage 2 was similar to that seen nationally. Rigorous focus and direction from leaders to tackle improvements needed, in test preparation and applying skills learned consistently have reaped rewards. A higher proportion of pupils this year reached expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics combined. Outcomes are higher than the provisional 2017 national average. Leaders agree that pupils making more ambitious vocabulary choices and applying accurate spellings more consistently in their work, will help to improve writing standards even further.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress from their starting points because of leaders' excellent matching of provision to pupils' individual needs. Teachers and teaching assistants make sure that pupils have the support that they need to be successful learners across the curriculum.

- Disadvantaged pupils' needs are very well addressed through a rigorous system of assessment and highly effective resulting support. The communication between leaders, teachers and teaching assistants is very successful in identifying the appropriate support needed and checking the impact of these interventions. As a result, disadvantaged pupils make accelerated progress. In many cases, they have caught up with others nationally, and where any gap remains, it is diminishing well.
- The most able pupils make strong progress across the curriculum due to the careful checks teachers make on their progress and the subsequent direction of how to deepen and extend their learning.
- Pupils' work on display, and in books and in folders confirms the school assessments that most pupils achieve standards across a wide curriculum that are at least typical, and often better, for their age.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Leaders and staff have created an inspirational environment for children to learn in. The thought and care taken in planning areas of learning, inside the classrooms and in the outdoor spaces, result in a culture where learning and fun are high on the agenda.
- The highly organised early years teams know each child's individual needs well and what support children need to take their learning forward. Staff expect children to do their very best, and children do. Children enter school with skills that are broadly typical for their age. They make strong progress through the early years. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development at the end of Reception is better than that seen nationally. The proportion of children leaving Reception with skills that are exceeding those typical for their age is increasing.
- The early years environment is rich with language and opportunities for children to test out their reading and writing skills in Nursery and Reception. A wealth of resources to promote writing can be found in almost all areas of learning indoors and outside, and children are eager to use them. For example, four boys were engrossed in an activity at a table with dinosaurs and resources to create their habitat. All the boys contributed to the discussion and one boy, with the help of the others, recorded the creative story on a clipboard.
- Records of children's learning demonstrate that they are making excellent progress. Children's books, photographs and folders show the progress that children are making across all areas of learning. For example, many children who were making marks for writing when they started school can now write in simple, punctuated sentences, complete with features, such as time connectives and correctly spelled basic words.
- The consistent way that adults model and teach phonics has a positive impact on how children confidently apply these new skills to their reading and writing. A balance of phonics books and 'real' books entice children to read and develop fluency.
- Children are encouraged to be independent learners as soon as they start school. Adults model areas of learning very effectively, and children follow their good example. One group of children, realising that much of the resource they were using had gone on the floor, set about cooperatively with dustpans and brushes, so that it was, in their words, 'ready for the next people who use it'.

- Leaders and staff place great importance on developing effective partnerships with parents. They make sure that parents of children in Nursery and Reception have regular opportunities to see their children in action in the classroom, celebrate their learning and find out more about ways that phonics and mathematics are taught. Parents can email information and photographs into school that are then added to the children's record of learning. Many parents are very positive about the fantastic start to school life their children receive. They make comments such as, 'school is happy and buzzing' and 'I am amazed at the progress my child is making'.
- Leaders make sure that the children learn in a safe environment. All adults are clear about safeguarding procedures. Risk assessments and training are in place. Children are taught how to keep themselves safe in the classroom and beyond.

School details

Unique reference number	106850
Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	10031917

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	521
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kerry Hattersley
Headteacher	Trudi Toms
Telephone number	0114 2570153
Website	www.thorpehesleyprimary.rotherham.sch.uk
Email address	thorpe-hesley.primary@rotherham.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Thorpe Hesley Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school. The school opened in September 2014, when Thorpe Hesley Junior School and Thorpe Hesley Infant School amalgamated.
- The school has a smaller than national proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below the national average.
- The school operates two breakfast clubs.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative, specialist provision throughout the week.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

- The early years comprises a part-time Nursery and three Reception classes.
- The school holds several nationally recognised awards, including the Basic Skills Quality Mark (third accreditation) and the Primary Science Quality Mark (silver).
- The school met the government's floor standards for 2016, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in a range of lessons across all classes, many alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work across the curriculum. Some of this took place alongside middle leaders. They also listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors looked at an extensive range of school documents, including: assessment information; school improvement planning; school self-evaluation; minutes of meetings of the governing body; information about the performance of teachers; external reports; moderation of assessment evidence; documents relating to behaviour and safety; and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Meetings took place with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, staff, representatives from the governing body, a representative from the local authority and groups of pupils.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the school. They also considered the 164 parent responses, the 127 pupil responses and the 48 staff responses to Ofsted questionnaires.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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