

Inspection of a good school: Thurlbear Church of England Primary School

Thurlbear, Taunton, Somerset TA3 5BW

Inspection dates:

1 and 2 May 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might be outstanding if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils thoroughly enjoy attending Thurlbear. There is a strong sense of community and warmth that permeates through the school. Classrooms buzz with interest and engagement. Learning activities inspire pupils. Pupils are inquisitive and keen to learn. They recognise that to get better at something, it takes practice. Through this, they develop resilience.

The consistently high expectations for behaviour are evident in all aspects of school life. Pupils take responsibility for their own behaviour. They show high levels of respect and politeness for others. Most pupils are impeccably well behaved. The school values of thankfulness, hope, friendship, wisdom and trust underpin the ethos of the school. Pupils know and understand these well. They live them out in their actions. Older pupils relish the opportunity of being positive role models. They show care and consideration to younger children when helping them to play games at social times.

Pupils enjoy a range of enrichment activities. These help pupils' learning to extend beyond the academic, for example representing the school in sporting competitions, singing in the school choir and taking part in debating events. Pupils also benefit from an array of extra-curricular clubs, such as art, computing, mindfulness, sports and dance. This helps them to develop talents and interests.

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

The school is highly ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. The curriculum sets out the essential knowledge pupils need to learn and the order in which to learn it. It is coherent and well sequenced. Subject content is broken down into small steps. Teachers ensure

that there are regular opportunities to revisit and recap on previous learning. This helps pupils to build on what they already know and to secure a strong understanding. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Staff have the training they need, together with strong subject knowledge, to deliver the curriculum well. Activities are well chosen to support pupils to learn new content. There is a distinct emphasis on developing pupils' vocabulary across the curriculum. Staff model this effectively and support and encourage pupils to do the same. As a result, pupils ably articulate their learning, using subject-specific vocabulary. Teachers use assessment extremely well to check what pupils know and can do. They swiftly remedy any misconceptions. Through effective questioning, teachers help to probe, consolidate and extend pupils' learning. This helps all pupils to learn the intended curriculum and to deepen their knowledge.

The school ensures that pupils' needs are well met. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are quickly identified. Support plans are accurate and precise. They identify appropriate steps that help pupils with SEND to learn successfully. Learning is effectively adapted so that all pupils learn the same ambitious curriculum.

The teaching of reading is exemplary. There is a firm and unrelenting belief and ambition that every child in the school will become a successful reader. And they do. Children start to read as soon as they start school. Systems are robust and ensure that no child falls behind. Thorough and regular assessment ensures that if pupils need help, this is quickly identified and intervention swiftly put into place. Staff are experts in teaching reading and they support pupils well. Pupils read books that match the sounds that they know. This helps them to develop fluency and confidence. As pupils progress through the school, they continue to build their fluency and reading skills.

The school has carefully selected a range of books to expose pupils to a wide variety of high-quality texts. Staff are knowledgeable about age-appropriate books. They read to their classes regularly. This starts in the early years, where children enjoy listening to stories, poems and rhymes. Older pupils read a range of books and authors that spark their imagination and enjoyment, as reflected in one pupil's description of how they love to 'get lost in a good story'.

The school's foundation stone inscription, 'train up a child in the way they should go', underpins the school's vision to provide pupils with the experiences they need to lead them to 'great life chances in the future'. Pupils learn to be active and responsible citizens. For example, through the work with the church, the community and through fundraising. The pupil 'values team' work with school leaders to further improve the school. For example, canvassing other pupils to review the range of extra-curricular clubs on offer.

Staff appreciate the care and consideration of school leaders for their workload and well-being. Parents welcome the many opportunities the school provides for pupils and how the staff go 'above and beyond'. One parent reflected the views of many in their comment, 'Positivity flows through the school and we are proud that our child wears the Thurlbear crest.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in November 2013.

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' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	123849
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10313259
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	5 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Gary Hurn
Headteacher	Steve Gillan
Website	www.thurlbear.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	26 June 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thurlbear Primary School is part of the Diocese of Bath and Wells. The school had its last denominational education inspection under section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in July 2019, when it was judged to be good.
- The school does not use alternative provision.
- There is a breakfast club and an after-school club led by the school for pupils who attend the school.

Information about this inspection

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in this evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with the headteacher and other senior leaders, curriculum leaders and groups of teachers.

- The inspector held meetings with governors and met with representatives from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the view of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's Parent View online survey. The inspector also spoke with parents at the start of the school day. The inspector considered the responses to the Ofsted online staff and pupil surveys.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. Additionally, the inspector spoke to pupils to discuss their views of the school.

Inspection team

Nicky McMahon, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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