

Inspection of Thornhill Junior and Infant School

Edge Lane, Thornhill, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire WF12 0QT

Inspection dates: 10 and 11 December 2024

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Good

The headteacher of this school is Jennifer Rylance. This school is part of Focus Academy Trust (UK) Ltd, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Helen Rowland, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Spencer.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Thornhill Junior and Infant School, pupils are happy and grow in confidence. They show curiosity in their learning. Pupils build their self-esteem in a safe and positive atmosphere.

The school maintains a calm and orderly environment. Pupils behave respectfully both in and outside the classroom. They follow instructions, engage well in group discussions and listen to each other. In lessons, pupils are attentive. This positive behaviour supports a focused learning environment, helping pupils achieve well. When pupils struggle with their self-regulation, staff provide effective support. This helps these pupils to make the right choices. The structured lunchtime programme is a firm favourite with pupils. It offers a rich range of activities that pupils enjoy. This programme helps pupils develop their social skills, encouraging positive interactions and teamwork.

The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. It adapts the curriculum expertly to broaden pupils' horizons. They are taught and remember essential life skills. Pupils learn how to stay safe and make empowered choices. They learn this through real-world scenarios and discussions relevant to their own context.

Despite facing wider challenges, pupils embrace the aspirational, supportive curriculum. They actively engage with all it has to offer. They attend school regularly and eagerly. Pupils look forward to their class achieving the high attendance 'welly awards'.

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

The school offers a broad and ambitious curriculum. Pupils' respectful and engaged behaviour contributes to their progress across the curriculum. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Over the past two years, the school has reviewed parts of this curriculum very effectively. The school has improved the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics significantly. This has led to a positive difference in pupils' achievements in key stage 1. However, what current pupils know and can do is not reflected in the historic outcomes for key stage 2.

The curriculum outlines the essential knowledge pupils need to learn. Pupils build on prior learning and make connections. For example, older pupils demonstrate a broader cultural awareness through their musical studies. They use their knowledge to create complex compositions. Pupils are articulate and use subject-specific vocabulary effectively to share their understanding. The school identifies, assesses and meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities well. They are fully immersed in this inclusive curriculum, supported by trained staff who provide both academic and emotional assistance.

The school has been through a period of change with many new staff starting at the school. In some subjects, there is variability in lessons. As a result, some tasks are not always purposeful and do not deepen pupils' subject knowledge. The school is supporting staff to improve their teaching practices and subject expertise effectively.

There is a strong reading culture across the school. Pupils enjoy sharing stories in class and are enthusiastic about their reading choices. They visit the on-site 'Big Red Bus' during breaks, an exciting place to read. Each year group has a carefully chosen list of books and stories to share. Pupils successfully learn to read using books that match their phonics knowledge. They get extra practice to build reading fluency and catch up where needed. Pupils enjoy reading with expression, and they explain how this engages the listener skilfully.

Children in the Reception class get off to a strong start. The school expertly tailors its curriculum to meet each child's needs. This includes careful consideration of how children develop their communication and language skills. Children enjoy learning nursery rhymes and listening to stories daily. Some adult interactions deepen children's thinking, for example a challenge to create more complex patterns. Games like 'Santa Says' promote listening skills and self-regulation. Children work with focus to complete tasks. They enjoy sitting at the 'tall table' to work on their pen control and writing. Children from low starting points achieve well. The school recognises historically low writing outcomes. It has developed the curriculum for writing and letter formation. These changes are at an early stage and are beginning to have a positive impact on writing.

Pupils' personal development and cultural awareness are expertly enriched by tailored curriculum decisions. For example, the extensive music offer allows pupils to learn about a range of musicians from different cultures. Pupils learn how to be responsible through leadership roles and community involvement. The 'Lion Award programme' for Year 5 pupils helps them navigate challenges. Parents are rightly highly positive about the programme's impact on their children's personal growth. The school promotes an inclusive environment well. Pupils learn about and respect different faiths and beliefs. They enjoy visits to places of worship and recall important details. Pupils understand equality and advocate for fairness. These experiences help pupils become independent, compassionate and well-rounded individuals. They articulate their thoughts clearly and express themselves with maturity. Pupils are ambitious for their future.

Leaders support staff well-being and workload. The trust and school ensure that staff, including early-career staff, receive the professional development that they need. Leaders at all levels provide effective wraparound support and challenge.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Staff subject knowledge is stronger in some subjects than others. This means the work that is given to pupils does not always support their deeper understanding of key

knowledge. The school should continue to develop staff subject expertise to design activities that are purposeful and deepen pupils' subject understanding.

- Pupils in the early stages of writing have not had enough practice to develop fluent, legible handwriting. This limits their ability to express their ideas in writing clearly and confidently as they progress through the curriculum. The school should continue to prioritise the development of fluent, legible handwriting.

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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	143231
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	10346617
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	352
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Spencer
CEO of the trust	Helen Rowland
Headteacher	Jennifer Rylance
Website	www.thornhilljschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 May 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is one of 15 schools in Focus Academy Trust (UK) Ltd.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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 inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history, music, and design and technology. 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, listened to pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the CEO and other trust and school leaders.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the trustees and local governing body, including the chair of trustees.
- Throughout the inspection, the inspectors met with groups of staff and considered the opinions expressed through the staff survey.
- The inspectors considered the views of parents expressed through Ofsted Parent View and met parents at the school gate.

Inspection team

Lesley Sullivan, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Jo Bentley	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Haunch	Ofsted Inspector

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