



Thirsk Community Primary School

Address: Hambleton Place, Thirsk, North Yorkshire, YO7 1SL

Unique reference number (URN): 121365

Inspection report: 10 February 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, pupils are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect schools for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- **Met:** The school has an open and positive culture of safeguarding. All legal requirements are met.
- **Not met:** The school has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Attendance and behaviour

Expected standard 

Leaders have taken effective action to improve pupils' attendance. Attendance is now slightly above the national averages. Staff work closely with families to understand and address barriers. Leaders' collaboration with external agencies is purposeful. Persistent absence for the majority of disadvantaged pupils has reduced significantly. Leaders continue to secure further improvements for those pupils whose attendance remains lower than it should be.

Across the school, leaders have established a calm, orderly and respectful environment where pupils behave well. The school's values underpin consistent expectations, and staff apply approaches to behaviour with confidence and care. Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning and engage well in lessons. They contribute thoughtfully to discussions and work purposefully. During social times, behaviour remains calm and respectful. Pupils who require extra support to manage their emotions benefit from well-considered and timely adult support.

Bullying is rare. Pupils understand the difference between falling out and bullying. They are confident that staff act quickly and effectively should concerns arise. The inclusive culture of the school ensures that discrimination and other forms of poor behaviour are not tolerated. Staff know pupils well and provide an environment where all feel supported, valued and safe.

Early years

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for the early years. They ensure that children receive a secure education and care from the moment they start school. Staff interactions support children's language and vocabulary development. Staff model rich language throughout the day and use questions effectively to deepen understanding. As a result, children develop confidence in speaking and listening, and build their vocabulary well.

The early years curriculum identifies the essential knowledge children need to learn. It is designed to address any gaps in children's knowledge with a clear focus on communication and language. Activities are carefully planned to help children revisit and practise important concepts. Children talk confidently about their learning and engage well in structured and exploratory learning.

Reading is a clear priority. Children in Reception are taught phonics immediately. Staff check children's understanding carefully and quickly address any gaps. Children apply their phonics knowledge with increasing fluency in both reading and writing.

The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in Reception is the same as children nationally. Children are well prepared for Year 1. They develop independence, early number sense and positive social skills. This enables them to access the next stage of learning confidently.

Partnerships with parents are notably positive. Staff and families work closely together to support learning and ensure children settle quickly and feel secure.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

This is an inclusive school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are disadvantaged and those facing wider vulnerabilities receive effective, well-targeted support. Leaders identify pupils' needs swiftly and accurately. They ensure that staff understand pupils' needs well. Regular training equips staff to implement appropriate strategies. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum alongside their peers. Leaders work closely with external professionals, such as speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. This helps to strengthen assessment and provision.

Leaders use their knowledge of pupils' barriers to learning to inform a well-designed pupil premium strategy. This includes effective pastoral support that aids pupils' emotional wellbeing and helps to develop resilience. Such support contributes to pupils engaging successfully in learning. The school's systems used to gather evidence and review targets are thorough. Leaders track academic and developmental progress effectively, particularly in communication and language. They ensure support for pupils is swift and adapted when needed. This helps pupils to progress well from their starting points. Support for pupils known to social care is well developed. The use of alternative provision is appropriate and ensures individual pupils' needs are appropriately met.

Personal development and wellbeing

Expected standard 

The personal development programme is thoughtfully designed to meet the needs of pupils and considers the context of the local community. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs, values and experiences. Pupils demonstrate a secure understanding of right and wrong. Through assemblies, personal, social and health education lessons and carefully planned activities, pupils discuss ethical issues with maturity and sensitivity. They show respect for differing viewpoints.

Leaders prioritise the development of pupils' social skills, cooperation and confidence. Structured leadership opportunities, such as wellbeing warriors, eco champions and junior leadership team, enable pupils to contribute actively to school life and the wider community. These roles help pupils to develop communication, teamwork and responsibility. Fundamental British values are taught through democratic processes, such as pupil applications and interviews for leadership roles, as well as in assemblies in which pupils explore these values.

Pupils benefit from a range of creative, artistic and cultural experiences through the school's own 'Thirsk passport' offer. This includes religious education linked visits, singing events and musical tuition. These opportunities deepen pupils' understanding of cultural diversity and broaden their horizons.

The school's curriculum for relationships and health education is well structured and age-appropriate. Pupils understand online and offline risks, consent, healthy relationships and personal safety. Leaders ensure that this programme is inclusive for all pupils.

Disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the full personal development and wellbeing offer. Staff make effective adaptations to ensure all pupils participate meaningfully. For example, they adjust the days of clubs to ensure pupils can attend. Work to develop pupils' character, resilience, integrity and sense of belonging is very effective and evident in pupils' positive attitudes, respectful conduct and growing confidence.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

At the end of Year 6, too few pupils gain the knowledge they need in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' achievement has been significantly below the national average over several years. Consequently, some pupils have not been as well prepared for the demands of secondary school as they should be. Children get off to a secure start in the early years. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development in Reception is the same as children nationally.

Some of the actions taken by leaders have had a positive impact for pupils currently at the school. Pupils are building their knowledge in mathematics more securely. Most pupils consistently develop the important knowledge they need in phonics to help them become confident readers. Over the last 3 years, pupils in Year 1 have attained well in the phonics check. That said, pupils have not been consistently well supported to ensure that they have the knowledge and skills they need in handwriting, spelling, punctuation and grammar. This limits the quality of pupils' written work across subjects and how well prepared they are for the next stage of their education.

Curriculum and teaching

Needs attention 

Leaders' vision for what pupils learn across the curriculum is not fully realised. Leaders have improved the curriculum design, ensuring the curriculum sets out what pupils should know and when. While the curriculum is ambitious and coherent, leaders recognise that teaching is inconsistent across some subjects. This is particularly the case in writing. Gaps in pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation knowledge are not identified and addressed consistently. This hinders pupils' progress, including some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Actions taken by leaders to improve the consistency of teaching in some subjects, including writing, are at an early stage.

In subjects such as mathematics, teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to ensure that pupils build their knowledge over time. Regular revisiting of prior learning helps pupils secure important understanding. Staff support pupils well to develop the phonics knowledge they need to become fluent readers. Pupils who require extra support receive this in a timely manner. Generally, pupils are supported well to develop their understanding of wider vocabulary.

Staff provide appropriate support for disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND. The support ensures that pupils access the same curriculum as their peers, but they experience

the same inconsistencies in some aspects of teaching.

Leadership and governance

Needs attention 

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced several changes in leadership, including at governance level. Although some leaders are new to their role, they have been careful to understand the school's context and are taking action to improve aspects of provision. Leaders have a clear strategic vision and have prioritised actions that focus on improving the quality and consistency of education. However, some improvement work has taken longer than expected to embed due to the period of transition.

Governors are dedicated and understand their statutory responsibilities. They share leaders' ambition for the school and are increasingly confident in holding leaders to account. They review key information about the school's performance and ask appropriate questions about the use of resources, including funding for disadvantaged pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. While governance is strengthening, governors recognise the need to sharpen their oversight of the impact of leaders' actions to ensure improvements are sustained and timely.

Leaders and governors make decisions in the best interests of pupils. This includes careful consideration of those who may be disadvantaged or those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Safeguarding, inclusion and wellbeing are prioritised.

Professional development is thoughtfully planned. Staff, including teachers at the start of their career, benefit from a coherent programme of training that is informed by research and tailored to developing expertise. Leaders are mindful of staff workload and wellbeing. Leaders listen to staff and adapt systems where necessary to reduce unnecessary burdens. Many parents and carers are very positive about the school.

What it's like to be a pupil at this school

Pupils are proud to attend this welcoming school. Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Their achievement in national tests at the end of key stage 2 has been below national expectations for the last 3 years.

Pupils enjoy learning, which takes place in calm and focused classrooms. Recent changes to the curriculum are making a difference to how well pupils learn, particularly in mathematics. However, some changes to the curriculum are very recent. There is variability in the way staff deliver some aspects of the curriculum, including writing. Consequently, pupils are not as well prepared as they should be for the next stages.

In early years, the curriculum is well considered, and children get off to a positive start. Children build important early knowledge and skills. Younger pupils learn phonics well, with results consistently close to the national average in the phonics screening check.

Pupils behave well. Leaders ensure that pupils know how to express their feelings. Staff listen to any concerns and help pupils to make the right choices. Pupils live out the school's values, particularly 'compassion'. Throughout the day, pupils check that their peers are okay. They are confident that adults will sort out any problems. Consequently, bullying is rare and pupils feel safe in school.

Pupils enjoy the wider opportunities provided, such as clubs and fulfilling leadership roles. These experiences help pupils to broaden their interests and develop confidence. Most pupils attend school regularly. Where attendance is lower, the school works with families to remove any barriers. Pupils' attendance continues to improve.

Leaders make reasonable adjustments to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND can take part in all aspects of school life. These include local sports competitions, such as cross country and multi skills.

The school has been through a period of change. Leaders have begun to strengthen many areas and have made a positive start. However, there is still significant work to do to ensure pupils fully benefit from this.

Next steps

- Leaders should ensure that pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, develop the knowledge and skills they need in relation to their handwriting, spelling and punctuation so that they are able to produce written work of a consistently high quality across the curriculum.
- Leaders and governors should ensure that they have a precise oversight of the actions taken to improve the school so that any weaknesses can be promptly identified and addressed.
- Leaders should continue to closely analyse absence and implement strategies to further improve the attendance of a small proportion of pupils that continue to be persistently absent from school.

About this inspection

The co-chairs of the board of governors in this school are Stephanie Deuchars and Cathy Greenaway.

Inspectors carried out this full inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Following our renewed inspection framework, all inspections are now led by His Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) or by Ofsted Inspectors (OIs) who have previously served as HMIs.

Inspectors spoke with the headteacher and other school leaders, governors, including the co-chairs, and a representative from the local authority.

The inspectors confirmed the following information about the school:

The school currently makes use of one alternative provision.

The school has undergone a significant change since the last inspection. A new headteacher took up post in January 2024. There are two new co-chairs of governors.

Headteacher: Jacob Harrison

Lead inspector:

Kathryn McDonald, His Majesty's Inspector

Team inspector:

Amy Blackburn, His Majesty's Inspector

Facts and figures used on inspection

The data was used by the inspector(s) during the inspection. More recent data may have been published since the inspection took place.

 This data is from 10 February 2026

School and pupil context

Total pupils

148

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils currently at this school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 272

School capacity

180

Below average

What does this mean?

The total number of pupils who can attend the school and how this compares to other schools of this phase in England.

National average: 300

Pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM)

44.59%

Well above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years.

National average: 26.3%

Pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan

6.08%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan. This covers pupils with more support than is available through special educational needs support.

National average: 3.5%

Pupils with special educational needs (SEN) support

20.95%

Above average

What does this mean?

The proportion of pupils with reported special educational support needs at the school.

National average: 15%

Location deprivation

Well above average

What does this mean?

Based on the English Indices of Deprivation (2019) and the school's location, we have calculated whether the school is located in a more or less deprived area.

Resourced Provision or SEND Unit (if applicable)

No resourced provision

What does this mean?

Whether school has Resourced Provision or SEND unit (if applicable).

All pupils' performance

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in a combined reading, writing and mathematics measure.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	37%	61%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	30%	62%	Below
2023/24 (final)	35%	61%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	60%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	63%	74%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	57%	75%	Below
2023/24 (final)	69%	74%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	64%	73%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	50%	72%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	47%	72%	Below
2023/24 (final)	46%	72%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	71%	Below

Pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	49%	73%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	37%	74%	Below
2023/24 (final)	54%	73%	Below
2022/23 (final)	59%	73%	Below

Disadvantaged pupils' performance

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	24%	46%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	18%	47%	Below
2023/24 (final)	13%	46%	Below
2022/23 (final)	40%	44%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	62%	62%	Close to average
2024/25 (revised)	55%	63%	Close to average
2023/24 (final)	63%	62%	Close to average
2022/23 (final)	70%	60%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	41%	59%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	36%	59%	Below
2023/24 (final)	38%	58%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	58%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
Latest 3 year average	31%	60%	Below
2024/25 (revised)	18%	61%	Below
2023/24 (final)	25%	59%	Below
2022/23 (final)	50%	59%	Close to average

Disadvantaged pupils' performance gap

Disadvantaged pupils are those who have been eligible for free school meals at any point in the last six years and children looked after. The school disadvantage gap is the difference between the performance of the school's disadvantaged pupils compared to the performance of all non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics, including the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	24%	68%	-43 pp
2024/25 (revised)	18%	69%	-51 pp
2023/24 (final)	13%	67%	-55 pp
2022/23 (final)	40%	66%	-26 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in reading

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in reading and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	62%	80%	-18 pp
2024/25 (revised)	55%	81%	-26 pp
2023/24 (final)	63%	80%	-17 pp
2022/23 (final)	70%	78%	-8 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in teacher-assessed writing and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	41%	78%	-36 pp
2024/25 (revised)	36%	78%	-42 pp
2023/24 (final)	38%	78%	-40 pp
2022/23 (final)	50%	77%	-27 pp

Disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in mathematics

The percentage of disadvantaged pupils meeting the expected standard in mathematics and the disadvantaged gap.

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
Latest 3 year average	31%	80%	-49 pp
2024/25 (revised)	18%	81%	-62 pp
2023/24 (final)	25%	79%	-54 pp

Year	This school	National non-disadvantaged score	School disadvantage gap
2022/23 (final)	50%	79%	-29 pp

Absence

Overall absence

The percentage of all possible mornings and afternoons missed due to absence from school (for whatever reason, whether authorised or unauthorised) across all pupils.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	8.4%	5.2%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	8.1%	5.5%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	6.6%	5.9%	Close to average

Persistent absence

The percentage of pupils missing 10% or more of their possible mornings and afternoons.

Year	This school	National average	Compared with national average
2024/25 (2 term)	21.7%	13.3%	Above
2023/24 (3 term)	27.1%	14.6%	Above
2022/23 (3 term)	17.7%	16.2%	Close to average

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other schools can learn from it.

Strong standard

The school reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The school is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention ●

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement ●

The school needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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