

Thornby Hall School

Inspection dates 10–12 November 2015

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since joining the school in November 2014, the exceptional leadership of the director of education has transformed the provision and he has successfully eliminated previous inadequacies.
- Teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about the subjects they teach.
- The pace at which pupils are learning across a range of subjects has improved dramatically over the last year.
- Rigorous assessment of pupils' abilities on entry to the school means that they make a good start to their education at Thornby Hall. Regular checks on the progress pupils make results in the effective planning and teaching of lessons.
- The school has an effective target-setting system in place. Challenging but realistic targets enable pupils to make good progress in the time they are at school.
- Pupils study a wide range of subjects that support their learning well and ensure they make progress in a variety of areas. Pupils' individual needs are taken into account when designing their timetables.
- The school promotes fundamental British values well in everything it does. Pupils are protected against radicalisation and extremism because of high levels of support and close working relationships with staff.
- Positive links with the on-site children's home mean that key information about pupils is shared effectively and promotes personal development.
- There is a strong culture of safety where pupils feel valued and cared for. The school works well with other agencies to safeguard pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour improves during the time they are at the school. There are very few incidents which result in physical intervention by staff.
- The school makes a positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Middle leadership is not as effective as it could be. Systems do not yet allow key staff to drive forward progress enough in their subject areas.
- The new governing body is not yet having a significant impact on ensuring good outcomes for pupils.
- Attendance has improved but is not yet at the level school leaders wish it to be.
- Not all teaching is yet as effective as it could be. This is particularly evident in the teaching of reading and mathematics.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of teaching that results in the substantial progress of pupils, by:
 - ensuring the teaching of reading across the school is consistently good or better
 - develop further approaches which engage and inspire all pupils to do their best in mathematics.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school, by:
 - ensuring that the actions of middle leaders are focused on improving pupil outcomes
 - improving the school's strategy for delivering the school curriculum in combination with therapeutic approaches to meet the needs of all pupils.

- Improve the overall attendance of pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The director of education has had an exceptional impact on improvements across the school. His determination to improve the quality of education has transformed the school so that it now provides a good quality service for pupils. The director of education demonstrates high expectations in all that he does. The staff team are fully supportive of the director of education and recognise his significant contribution to improving the school.
- Leaders have ensured that the independent school standards are met and have developed a good understanding about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This work has resulted in the production of a comprehensive self-evaluation document which inspectors found to be accurate. Leaders have used this information to plan the next stages of development for the school.
- The school development plan provides the staff team with clear priorities for their work. This has helped teachers and support staff to understand their individual roles in school improvement. The director of education has selected the right priorities for improvement. The school has improved rapidly as a result.
- There are effective systems to ensure that the performance management of teachers is robust. The process is welcomed by staff and is effective in holding staff to account for the work they do. Teaching has improved as a result of this work.
- The professional development of teachers is now a strength. Training is clearly linked to the individual needs of teachers and whole-school priorities. Teachers have a good understanding about their own strengths and areas for improvement.
- Links between the children's home and day school are positive. The morning briefing between children's home staff and school staff means that up-to-date information about the pupils' well-being is shared effectively. School staff then review and develop the activities on offer to the pupils flexibly for that particular day. This work helps to meet the needs of pupils.
- The range of subjects and activities offered to pupils is good. Pupils get the opportunity to study subjects which promote a range of skills that prepare them well for when they leave school. The school takes into account the individual needs of pupils and plans personalised provision where necessary to improve behaviour and achievement. The school uses an external provider to deliver alternative education each week. This work results in high levels of pupils' engagement because the alternative provision is exciting and fun.
- The culture of safeguarding throughout the school is strong. Two daily meetings allow teachers and support staff to share any concerns about pupils immediately. Inspectors found that school staff, in conjunction with the children's home staff, are quick to respond to any situations where they feel pupils may come to harm.
- The development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is set out in teachers' planning. Pupils learn about different religions and how to be a good citizen in modern Britain. Pupils participate in regular charity events such as the 'Great Thornby Bake-off'.
- School leaders and governors do not have a clear understanding of how the education and therapy aspects of the whole provision link together. This inhibits the achievement of pupils.
- Recently, the school has improved the leadership structure. The school recognises that while middle leaders are in place they are not yet having a full impact on improving outcomes for pupils.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governance of the school is not yet fully effective. Although governors provide a good balance of support and challenge to the director of education, they are currently over-reliant on this key member of staff to drive the work of the school forward. Governors have a range of professional skills which are helpful to the school, including experience in safeguarding and special educational needs.
 - The director of Thornby Hall and the governing body hold the director of education to account through robust performance management which includes challenging targets. This work is effective.
 - Governors analyse a wealth of information about the school and are knowledgeable about the current strengths and areas requiring improvement. Governors also analyse the progress of pupils alongside the director of education.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The assessment of pupils' skills and knowledge when they start at the school, in the areas of English and mathematics, is a strength. As a result, teachers plan pupils' learning well during the first stages of their education at Thornby Hall.
- Teachers formally check the progress pupils are making at six points throughout the school year. The majority of teachers use this information well to inform their planning for the next steps of the pupils learning. Occasionally teachers do not use the wealth of information they have about pupils to plan the best lessons. This is particularly evident in the teaching of reading and mathematics.
- Teachers' planning is of a good quality. Teachers wisely design learning activities which engage the pupils' interests. Most of the time, teachers cleverly weave the teaching of English and mathematical skills and knowledge into their subject areas. In a technology lesson, the teacher planned activities to promote the pupils' ability to spell key words.
- The school chooses to mark pupils' work regularly. This provides pupils with useful information about how well they have worked in relation to their target grades. All subjects use the same marking system so pupils know how well they have done. Marking usually includes clear next steps of learning which are then reviewed when work is completed.
- The questioning of pupils by staff is a strength throughout the school. Teachers are highly skilled at using their thorough knowledge of the young people to ensure that they ask the right questions at the right time. Teachers ask probing questions which help deepen pupils' knowledge.
- Pupils receive regular verbal feedback from staff about their work. Pupils usually respond very well to the praise and constructive comments they receive because they like and respect the views of their teachers and support staff.
- Most of the time, pupils' behaviour for learning is good. Pupils want to spend time with their teachers and engage well with the learning activities.
- Teachers and support staff conduct themselves in a professional manner. They take their jobs seriously and demonstrate a strong commitment to securing the very best outcomes for the pupils. School staff have created an effective climate for learning in which the pupils have every opportunity to thrive.
- Teachers use classroom support well. Staff are appropriately deployed to support the pupils at the right time. Staff from the children's home are also used effectively to provide pupils with the necessary encouragement they need to engage in their lessons.
- Teachers show a great deal of flexibility in designing the school day to meet the individual needs of pupils. This personalised approach allows pupils every opportunity to make the progress they should in all lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- At the end of each school day, pupils and staff gather together for community meetings. These opportunities allow all pupils a time to express their views and explore wider issues; this promotes individual development and their future safety as adults. The community meetings successfully promote the raising of pupils' self-esteem.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are exceptionally strong. Pupils feel safe because they feel valued and cared for by all of the adults who work with them. Any instances of bullying are dealt with immediately because pupils feel able to report these concerns to members of staff.
- Pupils value the well-maintained environment which is kept free from hazards which may cause harm. Fire safety arrangements are robust and effective risk assessments are in place for necessary activities.
- Staff are well trained in child protection procedures. There are effective systems in place for raising concerns about individual pupils and they work well. No stone is left unturned when a concern is raised about the safety of a pupil.
- Pupils have a good understanding about how to keep safe online. Through the curriculum, they are taught about behaviours which may put them at risk.

- Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans are in place for all pupils. These are updated as necessary and are effective in keeping the pupils safe both at school and whilst at the alternative provision.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are well supported to improve their responses to difficult situations because all staff at the school are well trained in behaviour management and physical interventions. The staff team use humour incredibly well to diffuse any potentially challenging behaviour. In recent months there have been very few significant incidents of very poor behaviour during the school day or at the alternative provision.
- The behaviour of pupils is usually much improved over time. The longer pupils attend Thornby Hall School, the better their behaviour becomes. A number of pupils are currently attending local sixth form colleges for their studies because their behaviour has improved so much. Pupils' behaviour while attending alternative provision is good.
- Pupils respond well to the school's systems for rewarding of positive behaviour and the sanctioning of poor behaviour. Pupils understand the way in which they must behave and the positive attitude they must show to their learning in order to be rewarded.
- In the strongest lessons, pupils show a thirst for learning and are encouraged to do their best. A quote from one teacher to a pupil, 'I know it's hard but you are doing brilliantly,' was typical of the challenge and support to pupils inspectors heard consistently throughout the inspection.
- Attendance at Thornby Hall School has improved markedly over the last 12 months but still remains a concern for school leaders. Staff work tirelessly to ensure that pupils attend the school and are committed to improving this aspect of their work further. The director of education and deputy headteacher work closely with the children's home staff to encourage attendance and this is having a positive impact for most pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- School leaders are able to demonstrate that the majority of pupils make expected or above expected progress in relation to the targets set for them by the school. These targets take into account the significant disruption the pupils have had to their education. All pupils are registered as disadvantaged. Pupils currently on roll at Thornby Hall School are making considerable progress from their starting points in English, due to the high-quality teaching they receive.
- Most-able pupils are catered for very well. Due to the individualised nature of the curriculum and high levels of pupil support these pupils usually excel in areas of the curriculum they are enthusiastic about. The school has supported pupils to achieve A-grade GCSEs. Pupils with a talent for art produce work of a very high quality.
- All pupils have special educational needs and most pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. The school utilises the information provided in statements or plans to support pupils' learning. These strategies result in the correct support for pupils and therefore accelerate their achievement in academic subjects.
- Where the school receives pupil premium funding for pupils they provide relevant support which contributes to good levels of achievement. The funding allows pupils to access high levels of support and extra teaching sessions in key subjects. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- There are no discernible differences in outcomes for pupils across the curriculum. Individual subject teachers are quick to act when they identify underperformance. Consequently, pupils quickly get the support they need to be successful.
- The school is increasingly good at preparing pupils for being successful during the next stages of their education, employment and training. Feedback from a local college indicates that pupils receive first-rate support from the school prior to and during their time at college.
- Pupils' outcomes in English are good. However, the school recognises it still has much to do to further promote reading across the school. The appointment of the new special educational needs and literacy coordinators are helping to promote the use of the underused library and develop the work of other staff in promoting reading across the school and in the children's home.

- Pupils' progress in mathematics is not as strong as it is in English. Recent pupil performance information indicates that this situation is improving but there is still some under performance. School leaders have recognised this and have rigorous plans already in place to improve outcomes for pupils in mathematics further.

School details

Unique reference number	122148
Inspection number	10006088
DfE registration number	928/6061

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Special
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	10
Proprietor	Childhood First
Chair	Simon Villette
Director of Education	Andrew Cutts-McKay
Annual fees (day pupils)	£71,011
Telephone number	01604 740001
Website	http://childhoodfirst.org.uk/our-services/residential-care/thornby-hall/
Email address	enquiries@childhoodfirst.org.uk
Date of previous school inspection	3–4 October 2012

Information about this school

- The director of Thornby Hall and the director of education are both new to post since the last inspection.
- There is an on-site children's home. Currently all pupils on roll live at the children's home.
- The school was last inspected in October 2012 and a progress monitoring inspection was undertaken in October 2013.
- The school uses a not-for-profit community interest company called Adventure Ways to deliver weekly alternative education programmes to the pupils.
- Currently, the organisation commissions local colleges to deliver sixth form education. Thornby Hall uses Moulton College and Brooksby Melton College.
- Thornby Hall states that it is a residential therapeutic community and special school.
- The governance arrangements are structured to provide one governing body for Greenfield school and Thornby Hall School. Greenfield School is also owned by the Childhood First charity and is located in Kent. Most governors are employees of the Childhood First charity.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors worked closely with the social care regulatory inspectors who were conducting an aligned inspection of the on-site children's home at the same time.
- Inspectors observed lessons in most subject areas and observed pupils' behaviour around the school site and at lunchtimes.
- Inspectors analysed a range of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the director of education, deputy headteacher, teachers and governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from local colleges and local authority officers from the pupils' original home areas.
- Inspectors talked with pupils throughout the inspection.
- A range of school documentation was evaluated, including information related to the safeguarding of pupils and the comprehensive self-evaluation document.
- Inspectors analysed responses to Ofsted's confidential staff survey.
- There were no responses to Parent View.

Inspection team

Phil Harrison, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

James Waite

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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