

Thomas Johnson Lower School

Hurst Grove, Lidlinton, Beds, MK43 0SB
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Tel: 01525 402377 / 404743
www.thomasjohnsonschool.co.uk

Headteacher: Mr Simon Bolger

Monday 9th January 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

Today, we are extremely proud to be able to say that we are officially a **GOOD** school!

With the following areas also judged as:

The quality of education	GOOD
Behaviour and attitudes	GOOD
Personal development	GOOD
Leadership and management	GOOD
Early years provision	GOOD

The inspection ran over two days on the 23rd and 24th November with a 2-hour telephone discussion the day before. We found the experience to be robust, challenging, supportive, fair - and extremely positive. The inspectors worked very hard to really understand every aspect of our school, our uniqueness and what we know makes us so special.

The children were wonderful and made the inspectors feel very welcome in our school. They were a real credit to the school - and obviously to you too.

The report summarises our school and shows everyone what a wonderful place it is to be and why we are the perfect school for parents and carers to choose.

During the inspection, the words used by the inspectors to describe their experience at our school, were at times, simply overwhelming. I don't mind admitting that I shed a few tears as I listened to the final feedback and as the judgements were being finalised at the end of the inspection.

We are so passionate about what we are doing here at TJLS - and as a community you deserve to have a good school as your beating heart. That is what we are trying to build towards and accomplish here.

As a Headteacher, any Ofsted inspection is challenging - but even more so when you've only been at the school for just 10 weeks! I started at TJLS in September with lots of ideas and exciting things to try - and the staff very quickly jumped onboard. In just the space of a few weeks, our vision and ethos in school has gone from strength to strength. There is a buzz around the school at the moment - and it is magical.

I am excited, delighted and honoured to be the Headteacher of this school. I'm so proud of the children - and I feel privileged to work alongside the colleagues I have.

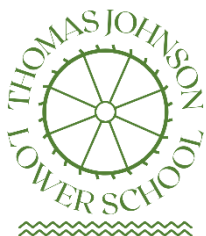
I have said from day one that I want this school to be the happiest school in the world. I want it to be a wonderful place for children to learn and a great place for adults to work. If the children don't feel the love, then their learning will never take off in the way it deserves to.

This priority will never be compromised.

Dream - Discover - Flourish

The aim of our curriculum is to open doors of opportunity for our children





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Below, we have picked out some of our favourite quotes from the report - but I would encourage you to take the time to read the full report - of which we are very proud.

Pupils at Thomas Johnson Lower are happy and get along well with one another. Everyone, including those who are new to the school, feel included and welcomed.

The school is recognised for being at the heart of its community.

The curriculum supports pupils to achieve well.

Pupil's achievements are recognised and rewarded in several ways [and] all help to create a harmonious school community.

As one parent said, 'it is clear the staff at Thomas Johnson know their pupils.'

Leaders have carefully considered the curriculum content. They have high aspirations for all pupils.

Pupils with SEND achieve well alongside their peers.

Leaders have designed and put in place a clear phonics and reading programme. By the time they are in Year 1, pupils use their knowledge to read words of increasing complexity.

Leaders promote a love of reading by sharing high quality texts. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

In the early years classes, children meet the high expectations set for them. Staff build strong relationships with children and their families.

Pupils are friendly and polite. They understand what is expected of them. Pupils behave well in lessons. They pay attention, concentrate on the tasks they have been set. This ensures that there is no disruption to learning.

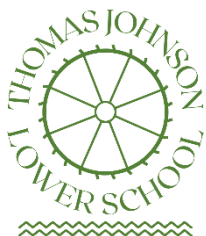
Leaders continue to evaluate and extend how they cater for pupils' wider development. These opportunities help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about recent changes.

Staff say they are proud to work at the school.

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Leaders know the school's strengths and areas to improve.

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have created a culture where staff care about pupils deeply.

Our next steps:

Leaders have prioritised some subject areas over others to ensure that pupils build upon their basic skills. In a small number of curriculum areas, plans are less well structured. Leaders need to continue to ensure that the content in every subject plan is set out clearly.

This next step was something we already had in place - so the inspection confirmed we were accurate with our judgement. In September, we prioritised developing writing across the school by implementing 'The Write Stuff' approach. Our curriculum is central to everything and we already have plans in place to address this next step as quickly as possible. More information about this can be found [here on our website](#).

Leadership roles and responsibilities of leaders have not been defined well enough. This means that some staff are not sure about how they can be fully effective in their roles. Senior leaders, including governors, need to continue to develop and define clear roles and responsibilities to ensure all leaders know how they can successfully contribute towards the school's success.

Again, this was no surprise to us - and confirmed we have made accurate judgements about the position of the school. As a small school, all of our staff wear many different 'hats' of responsibility. Early in September, we identified that some senior leader roles and responsibilities were not as clearly defined as they could be - and so we have started to implement plans to create a culture of distributed leadership.

In summary...

We want you, like us, to feel so very proud to send your children to TJLS. We want you to feel confident when speaking to prospective parents about the offer we provide children. And above all, we want you to feel confident in leaving your children in our care.

I would now encourage you to help us to share this fantastic news with the wider community and feel confident to tell everyone they should choose TJLS without hesitation.

On behalf of all the staff, I'd like to thank you for your support. We are honoured to serve this wonderful community and we look forward to sharing the next steps in our journey with you.

Thank you for believing in us,

Mr Simon Bolger
Headteacher

Dream - Discover - Flourish

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Inspection of Thomas Johnson Lower School

Hurst Grove, Lidlington, Bedford, Bedfordshire MK43 0SB

Inspection dates: 23 and 24 November 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Thomas Johnson Lower are happy and get along well with one another. Everyone, including those who are new to the school, feels included and welcomed. The school is recognised for being at the heart of its community.

From the moment children join the early years, the school's values of 'dream, discover and flourish' are interwoven in their day-to-day lives in all they do. Pupils respond positively to the high expectations staff promote and typically behave well. Bullying hardly ever happens. If pupils have any worries, they can tell a trusted adult and know that they will be well supported. As a result, pupils feel safe at school.

The curriculum supports pupils to achieve well. This includes those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In most subjects, the curriculum is organised thoughtfully to ensure pupils build securely on what they have learned before.

Pupils' achievements are recognised and rewarded in several ways. House points, attendance awards and recognition for when pupils demonstrate school values, all help to create a harmonious school community. Relationships between pupils and adults are positive. Parents appreciate this. As one parent said, 'It is clear the staff at Thomas Johnson know their pupils.'

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

Leaders have carefully considered the curriculum content. They have high aspirations for all pupils. Leaders check the curriculum in all subject areas and are continuing to develop and implement the ambitious curriculum they have in place. In most subjects, including English and mathematics, the curriculum is carefully planned and well taught. There remain a few subjects where plans are less detailed. This makes it more difficult for teachers to know what pupils have learned before.

Pupils with SEND are supported to access the same curriculum as other pupils. Pupils' needs are identified accurately. Additional effective training is put in place for staff to ensure they are able to adapt their teaching to support pupils with SEND well. Consequently, pupils with SEND achieve well alongside their peers.

Leaders have designed and put in place a clear phonics and reading programme. Children in the early years begin learning the sounds letters make as soon as they start school. By the time they are in Year 1, pupils use their knowledge to read words of increasing complexity. Most pupils read books that are closely matched to their phonics knowledge. When and if pupils fall behind, teachers provide timely support to enable them to catch up quickly.

Leaders promote a love of reading by sharing high-quality texts. This helps pupils to become confident and fluent readers.

In the early years classes, children meet the high expectations set for them. This includes settling into routines quickly so that they learn well. The curriculum for early years is as ambitious as for the rest of the school. This includes a focus on early mathematical and language skills. The curriculum ensures that children are well prepared for the move to Year 1. Staff build strong relationships with children and their families.

Pupils are friendly and polite. They understand what is expected of them. Pupils behave well in lessons. They pay attention and concentrate on the tasks they have been set. This ensures that there is no disruption to learning. When introducing changes, leaders have thought carefully about how to reinforce school values and those of society. For example, recent improvements to the behaviour system were linked to British values.

Leaders continue to evaluate and extend how they cater for pupils' wider development. The school provides opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship and to take part in first-hand experiences such as Bollywood dancing and cooking traditional Jewish food. These opportunities help pupils to develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils' understanding of democracy is enhanced through the selection of school council members and the house captains. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about recent changes but would like more opportunities for their children to attend clubs.

Staff say that they are proud to work at the school. They appreciate the consideration that leaders give to their workload.

Leaders, including governors, know the school's strengths and areas to improve. A review by new leaders has identified that not all leadership roles are as clearly defined as they need to be to ensure all leaders are able to carry out their role effectively. While new leaders are effective, the roles and responsibilities are being considered. As a result, this is starting to contribute successfully towards improving all aspects of leaders' work.

Governors play an active role in the life of the school and speak to pupils to gauge opinions. They are clear about how to improve the school. Governors are accessing training to further develop their effectiveness. This is ensuring that they are increasingly able to support leaders in their work.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a culture where staff care about pupils deeply. Leaders provide staff with high-quality training and frequent updates. Staff understand their responsibility to report any concern, however slight. They are aware of the latest statutory guidance.

Pupils are taught about how to keep themselves safe in a range of settings, for example around railway lines and when online.

Leaders make the necessary checks on adults at the school to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have prioritised some subject areas over others to ensure that pupils build upon their basic skills. In a small number of curriculum areas, plans are less well structured. Leaders need to continue to ensure that the content in every subject plan is set out clearly.
- Leadership roles and responsibilities of leaders have not been defined well enough. This means that some staff are not sure about how they can be fully effective in their roles. Senior leaders, including governors, need to continue to develop and define clear roles and responsibilities to ensure all leaders know how they can successfully contribute towards the school's success.

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](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109468
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10240988
Type of school	First
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	98
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Tim Mason
Headteacher	Simon Bolger
Website	www.thomasjohnsonschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thomas Johnson Lower School is a much smaller than average school.
- School leaders do not currently make use of any alternative provision for pupils.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, senior teacher, the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator, four governors, and representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning

and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspector also listened to a sample of pupils from Years 1 to 3 read to a member of staff.

- To inspect safeguarding, the inspector met the designated safeguarding lead, and reviewed documents and records, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.
- The inspectors also reviewed other school documentation, including policies and development plans.
- To gather the views of pupils, the inspectors spoke to groups of pupils, including in lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime. No pupils responded to the pupil survey.
- To gather the views of parents, the inspectors spoke to some parents and reviewed the 40 responses and 38 free-text responses submitted to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View.
- To gather the views of staff, the inspectors spoke to several staff. The inspectors also took account of the eight responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Simon Eardley, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Linda Bartlett	Ofsted Inspector
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