

Thamesmead School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	137237
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	397469
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2012
Lead inspector	John Meinke

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1002
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sandy Baars
Headteacher	Peter Rodin
Date of previous school inspection	4–5 December 2006
School address	Manygate Lane Shepperton Middlesex TW17 9EE
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

Inspection team

John Meinke	Additional inspector
Chris Corp	Additional inspector
Lesley Leak	Additional inspector
Cyndi Millband	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 36 lessons taught by 36 teachers, of which five were joint observations with senior members of staff. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of other lessons. They held meetings with two groups of students, members of the governing body and school staff, including senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online Parent View survey in planning the inspection. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of the governing body meetings and school policies. They also analysed responses to the inspection questionnaires completed by 239 parents and carers along with others completed by students and staff.

Information about the school

Thamesmead School is an average-sized secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of students are of White British heritage. The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is around average.

The school has performing arts college status and selects up to a maximum of 10% of admissions on aptitude in performing arts. It has gained various awards relating to its provision, including Investors in Careers Award, Investors in People Award and Sportsmark Award. The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

The school converted to academy status on 1 August 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because teaching, although good overall, is not yet strong enough to ensure that students make rapid and sustained progress across most subject areas.
- Students' academic progress is good and in 2011 the proportion of students achieving five or more GCSE results at grade C or higher was above average. While the large majority of students make good or better progress, for a small minority of students progress is no better than satisfactory. This is partly due to students' insufficiently high aspirations and expectations, which lead to satisfactory engagement in learning.
- Teaching is good and improving strongly. Most teachers plan lessons which contain a range of activities that engage students and enable them to make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Where teaching remains satisfactory, activities are not always well matched to meet the needs of learners and do not present a high level of challenge sufficiently early during lessons. While there is exemplary practice in assessment and marking, it is not consistent across the school and does not always offer students sufficient guidance on how to improve.
- Students are courteous to each other and they are welcoming to visitors. The vast majority of students feel very safe at school. Behaviour in the large majority of lessons is good and students demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. The few incidences of low-level disruptive behaviour during lessons are linked to teaching which does not fully engage all students in their learning.
- Senior leaders and managers communicate high expectations for students to achieve their best. Leaders have an accurate knowledge of the strengths and areas for development related to teaching and there is a determined drive to raise its quality to outstanding. Performance management is robust and ensures accountability.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching, in order to secure good and outstanding progress for all students, by:
 - consistently ensuring that planned activities are well matched to meet the needs of all learners and present a high level of challenge throughout lessons
 - improving the quality of marking and use of assessment so that it is as consistently detailed, informative and developmental as the very best in the school.

- Continue to raise aspirations and expectations for the small minority of students who are not yet making the progress that they could.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most students achieve well. The very large majority of students feel that they learn a lot and most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaires agreed; inspectors endorse these views. Students demonstrate a high level of engagement during lessons and show great enthusiasm for learning. They work very well together and enjoy discussing their work. In most lessons, teachers use assessment data to plan tasks which enable students to make good and sometimes outstanding progress. For example, in a mathematics lesson the planned activities consolidated students' prior learning well and enabled them to confidently tackle challenging problems. In an English lesson students were encouraged to reflect on the learning and identify areas for improvement, and this enhanced their progress.

Students enter the school with prior attainment that is generally above average. In 2011 students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 was also above average and most students make good progress. A small minority of students, including some lower-ability students, make satisfactory rather than good progress. This is sometimes related to students' insufficiently high aspirations and expectations, which result in satisfactory engagement in learning during lessons; in turn, these students produce work of a standard lower than that of which they are capable. Leaders rigorously monitor assessment information and current data indicate that the few remaining gaps between attainment in the school and nationally are being rapidly closed in order to ensure that all students make good or better progress.

There have been variations in the progress made by disabled students and those with special educational needs, with some students making good or outstanding progress while others make satisfactory progress. Provision for these students is now carefully matched to their needs to ensure that it supports learning well, and includes very good planning for the use of additional adults during lessons. Students are well

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cared for outside of lessons, including by home-school link and student support workers. This holistic approach means that disabled students and those with special educational needs are now making consistently good progress.

Students make good, and sometimes outstanding progress, in English and mathematics. There are good opportunities across the curriculum for the development of students' skills in literacy and numeracy. Provision is in place to ensure that students who enter the school with lower than average literacy and numeracy skills quickly make accelerated progress. The school has also formed partnerships with primary schools to support the development of these skills and ensure that all students achieve the expected standards by the end of Key Stage 2.

Quality of teaching

Students' good and steadily improving outcomes are secured through good and outstanding teaching over time. Most parents and carers believe that their child is taught well at the school and the inspection evidence concurs with these positive views. Lessons are characterised by good relationships between students and adults. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan varied activities which engage and enthuse learners. Questioning is used skilfully to challenge students and check their understanding. Students are encouraged to reflect on their learning and work cooperatively to tackle challenging tasks. Disabled students and those with special educational needs are taught very well, with effective deployment of additional adults to support learning. Regular homework is used to extend learning, including through research projects. The planned curriculum makes a good contribution to students' achievement and provides good opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through the exploration of moral and ethical issues during citizenship lessons.

In the best lessons teachers use their expertise to plan activities which are very well matched to learners' needs. In an outstanding mathematics lesson, planned activities included competitive games which excited and enthused learners. Students with special educational needs were very well supported, including through the deployment of an additional adult. Students' understanding was regularly checked and they felt confident about tackling increasingly challenging problems. In an outstanding drama lesson the teacher clearly explained the learning objectives and success criteria at the start of the lesson, enabling students to know how to reach the highest levels of achievement. Students collaborated well to produce performances of a high standard, including reflecting on techniques used and considering how to improve.

In the small minority of lessons observed where teaching was no better than satisfactory, planned activities were not always well matched to the needs of learners. On some occasions students were not given sufficiently challenging tasks until near to the end of the lesson, meaning that some, including the most able, did not make good progress. Although there is exemplary practice in the use of marking and assessment to provide students with guidance on how to improve, this is not yet

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consistent across the school. Sometimes students are not aware of the exact next steps they need to take in their learning and marking does not encourage students, especially less-able students, to produce work of the highest standards of which they are capable.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The large majority of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire indicated that there is a good standard of behaviour at the school. Students are courteous, polite and respectful to adults and each other, contributing to a calm and purposeful environment for learning. In lessons students demonstrate a positive attitude to learning and a high level of engagement. A small minority of parents, carers and students raised concerns about lessons being affected by low-level disruptive behaviour. Inspection evidence shows that most lessons proceed without disruption and the good behaviour seen during the inspection is typical of that over time. Off-task behaviour was observed in a few lessons during the inspection, often when teaching did not engage all learners and the school's behaviour management policy was not consistently applied. The school's rewards and sanctions policy is effective in promoting good behaviour and students with identified behavioural difficulties are supported very well.

The very large majority of students feel safe at school and parents and carers agree. Any reported incidences of bullying are dealt with very well. Students are knowledgeable about risk management, including e-safety. They have a good awareness of the different kinds of bullying, including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying and how to prevent it. The school's pastoral system offers a very high level of care and students and staff speak very highly of the additional support offered by student support and home-link workers. The school is particularly effective at working with students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The school has taken decisive action to improve attendance since the previous inspection, which is now above average

Leadership and management

The headteacher and his team, along with the governing body, communicate a clear vision for promoting high quality teaching which enables students to achieve their best, resulting in good and improving achievement. Self-evaluation is accurate and detailed. Leaders at all levels know the school very well and plan effectively for its improvement. Recent changes to the governing body have strengthened its ability to strategically support the school and challenge it to improve further. Arrangements for safeguarding meet statutory requirements. The capacity for further improvement is strong.

Robust arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching ensure that leaders at all levels are highly aware of its strengths and areas for development. Rigorous performance management, which ensures a high level of accountability, linked to an extensive programme of coaching and development, supports the drive to raise the

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quality of teaching to outstanding.

The broad and balanced curriculum is regularly reviewed and modified to ensure that it meets the needs of learners. The performing arts specialism permeates the school and makes a tangible difference to achievement and provides students with a wide range of opportunities through the extensive Thamesmead Plus enrichment programme, including opportunities to take part in dance, drama and music performances as well as sports clubs and teams. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported through the curriculum, including opportunities for trips and visits, including international trips, and charity events. Highly effective arrangements are in place to support transition and students are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

There is a strong commitment to promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Students are set challenging targets and their progress is carefully monitored by cohort, student group and individual to help ensure that they make good or better progress. The mixed-age tutor groups encourage students to mix well and they value diversity and difference. There are effective strategies in place to engage with parents and carers, including use of a home-link worker.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.

15 June 2012

Dear Students



Inspection of Thamesmead School, Shepperton TW17 9EE

Thank you for making the inspection team feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. You were positive about your school, saying that it helps you to be successful in whatever you do. We agree and think that Thamesmead School is a good school.

- Your achievement in the school is good. In 2011 GCSE results were above the national average and most of you make good progress at the school. A small minority of you make satisfactory rather than good progress, sometimes because your aspirations and expectations are not yet high enough.
- Most of you feel that you learn a lot during lessons and we agree. Most teaching is good or outstanding. Teachers plan lessons which meet your needs well and engage you in learning. Some teaching is still no better than satisfactory because you all do the same work and you are not challenged quickly enough during lessons. This sometimes leads to off-task behaviour. While some teachers' marking helps you to know how to improve, this is not consistent across the school.
- You are proud of your school and polite and courteous to visitors. Your behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Almost all of you feel safe at school and you are positive about the good pastoral care that you receive. Your attendance has improved over time and is now above average.
- Your school's leaders, managers and governors have very high ambitions for you to achieve your best. They know your school well and what they need to do to make it even better. The curriculum meets your needs well and, along with the Thamesmead Plus enrichment programme, promotes your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.

We have asked leaders and managers to work with staff to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and ensure that all of you make good or outstanding progress. We have also asked them to make sure that marking is consistent across the school so that you always know how to take the next steps in your learning. You can help by working hard in all of your lessons and making sure that you always produce work of your best standard.

We wish all of you at Thamesmead School a happy and successful future.

John Meinke
Lead inspector

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