

# Thomas Ashton School

Bennett Street, Hyde, Cheshire, SK14 4SS

**Inspection dates** 28–29 November 2012

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Pupils here have all experienced previous severe disruption to their education because of their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Almost all arrive showing educational standards well below those expected for their age.
- Following their enrolment most settle very quickly and begin to learn. All groups make good progress because of the good teaching. They are prepared well for moving on to Years 10 and 11 in the next school.
- Pupils start to enjoy lessons because the school is a safe place. They trust the adults to help them manage their behaviour. Almost all begin to attend regularly.
- Good behaviour management by the adults rewards pupils when they do well and keeps disruptions to a minimum.
- Teachers provide interesting lessons that capture pupils' imagination and encourage them to enjoy learning.
- Pupils' good behaviour is shown by their good attitudes in class and good demeanour in the public areas of the school. They feel very safe here.
- The gains that pupils make personally are closely related to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Leadership and management throughout the school are good. Some is outstanding, such as the high-quality leadership of the headteacher, in steering the school through recent great change and relocation.
- The creation of a brand new school, tailor-made to meet the needs of the pupils here, shows a high degree of management skill and excellent cooperation between the senior team, the governing body and the local authority.
- The school has settled into its new premises and established itself. The quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly through the effective management of the headteacher.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress is sometimes slower than it could be. This is because teachers set learning targets for pupils that are too broad and not always accurately matched to their needs or based on the latest information about their previous learning.
- When teaching assistants are unsure about the content of a lesson their support to pupils is less effective than it should be.
- The school has not yet provided all adults with clear guidance about how to consistently help pupils with their reading and writing.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed three lessons and made shorter visits to six other classrooms so that seven teachers were seen working throughout more than three hours. The inspector watched pupils having lunch, enjoying their breaktime and leaving the school in the afternoon.
- Pupils' work and the records of their achievements were studied. The inspector listened to pupils reading during their lessons and spoke to them informally to gain their views and opinions.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other members of the senior team, teachers, the school's business manager, a representative of the local authority and the Chair of the Governing Body.
- The views of staff were noted through meeting with them and by scrutinising their returned questionnaires.
- The inspection took account of the views of parents through a discussion with the one parent who asked to speak with the inspector, but there were insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire.
- The work of the school was observed and important documents concerning planning, self-evaluation, safeguarding, attendance, behaviour and the progress of pupils were looked at.

## Inspection team

Terry McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- The Thomas Ashton School admits pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. All have a statement of special educational needs.
- Since the last inspection the school has changed considerably. Previously known as Dale Grove School, situated on two sites, it admitted pupils aged from five to 16. In January 2012 the school moved to brand new purpose-built premises, changed its name and now admits pupils only to the end of Key Stage 3.
- The headteacher moved with the school but all other members of the senior team have been appointed this year. There are now fewer teachers and many more teaching assistants.
- Many pupils enrol in the early stages of primary education and continue through the school to be transferred at the end of Year 9. More than two thirds are known to be eligible for the pupil premium and this is very high compared to most other schools nationally. There are many more boys than girls and the ethnic mix of the school, which is predominately of White British heritage, reflects that of the local area.
- There are no arrangements for alternative provision or formal partnerships with other schools. However, an informal arrangement with the high school located close by provides opportunities for pupils to be taught by specialist teachers in science and food.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Managers must enable pupils to make the best possible progress in lessons by:
  - providing teachers with up-to-date, accurate information about pupils' standards and their previous progress so they can set individual, well-matched learning targets for pupils in each lesson
  - equipping teaching assistants to support pupils' learning as well as their behaviour
  - ensuring consistency of support throughout the school for pupils' literacy development.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Following their admission most pupils settle quickly. They appreciate the efforts of staff in helping them to manage their behaviour and take part in learning. They gain success in education often for the first time and start to attend willingly. One pupil summed this up by saying, 'I love coming to school!'
- Through these improvements in their behaviour they spend much more time in their classes than they did before. All groups, including girls and those known to be entitled to the pupil premium, make rapid progress and start to catch up with others in mainstream schools. In primary classes this early progress is very rapid indeed. It is maintained more steadily through secondary classes.
- Pupils make good gains in literacy and numeracy. Their reading improves and this helps them to gain from all areas of study. They are encouraged to use numbers in a practical way. For example, a lesson was observed designed to teach pupils how to use a spread sheet. The lesson was not called 'mathematics' but was associated with keeping accounts in an enterprise scheme. Thus, they had a real reason for developing these important skills.
- Pupils enjoy lessons because teachers make them interesting. As they gain success they become more confident and feel that they can contribute more. Consequently, pupils are keen to answer questions and take part in discussions.
- Their progress is at its best when targets for learning are made clear to them and when they receive high-quality support in lessons.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Following great upheaval and change the quality of teaching is being re-established as staff and pupils settle into the new environment. They are learning to make best use of all resources.
- A few lessons are outstanding because of the skill, versatility and charisma of the teachers. Staff generally provide very interesting activities that pupils want to take part in. Some lessons offer high-quality experiences designed to help pupils develop their skills in literacy and numeracy. These include science, design and technology, and the humanities. However, the support for reading and writing is not consistent because not all staff have yet received the appropriate training to help pupils use the sounds that letters make when learning to read (phonics).
- A very few lessons require improvement where teachers lead too much from the front and make pupils take turns in activities. In almost all lessons, and even where progress is good, learning is slower than it could be. This is because managers have not yet provided teachers with up-to-date information about pupils' previous learning and instructed teachers to use the information to challenge pupils as effectively as possible with lesson targets.
- Lessons benefit greatly from the close cooperation of the teachers and teaching assistants in managing behaviour in a very consistent and effective manner. This has a very positive influence on pupils' behaviour and enables them to learn and generally make good progress.
- However, in a very few lessons teaching assistants have not been provided with the knowledge, skills and understanding to help pupils to progress in their learning as much as they could.
- The efforts of managers in establishing regular observations of lessons and setting targets for teachers to improve are beginning to be successful. The school's own records indicate that the quality of teaching is improving and this was confirmed by the inspection. Pupils are gaining greatly from their learning and being well prepared for moving on to the next stage of their education.

**The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- Pupils' good behaviour suggests that they feel secure in school. They report that they feel very safe here and that bullying and harassment are rare. None are discriminated against. This is because of the high degree of staff supervision and the good behaviour management systems employed by them. This view is supported by staff and by the parent with whom the inspector spoke.
- Pupils' good behaviour is shown by their positive attitudes to learning and good demeanour in the public areas of the building.
- Many pupils had low levels of attendance before starting here but following their integration at Thomas Ashton the great majority significantly improve their attendance. For most, attendance is above the national average for all schools and very few are persistent in their absence.
- A small number do not attend regularly despite the best efforts of the school and the local authority. For these pupils the school does everything possible to maintain links with their families and keep them in some form of education such as home tuition.
- The radical improvements that pupils make in their behaviour enable them to take part in additional activities away from the school site. For example, just before the inspection all staff and pupils took part in a short flight from Manchester airport along with pupils from other schools. Their day was successful and memorable, and was without any major incidents. This was a great achievement for the pupils and for the staff who successfully manage them.
- Where pupils' behaviour occasionally slips in school, it is usually because they are expected to listen for too long in class or undertake tasks that are either too easy or too hard.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They learn to get on together and tolerate each other when working in small groups.
- Pupils establish positive relationships with staff that aid their behaviour and support their learning. They begin to respect the views of others and to understand about right and wrong.
- Trips, visits and activities outside of school, such as through the enterprise scheme, take them into the wider community so that they come into contact with people from different backgrounds.
- Most gain a spiritual awareness and understanding of the world through developing their reading, listening to stories, learning about science and taking part in lessons such as art and music.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The school was designed and built specifically for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The headteacher, working with the governing body, local authority and the contractors has skilfully established an environment that provides the best opportunities for adults to teach and pupils to learn.
- The design of the school helps staff monitor and manage pupils' behaviour. For example, there are wide corridors so that everything can be seen easily.
- Staff are trained to know how to look for the signs of impending difficult behaviour and how to deal with it so that situations remain as calm as possible. Consequently, pupils trust the adults to manage their behaviour effectively. This means they are in class most of the time and get more from their lessons. Staff are confident about managing behaviour and feel safe as a consequence of their training.
- Morale is high in the school and the staff are supportive of the senior team. A parent reported that the school has recently been effective in reaching out to families, with the result that she and others have joined the governing body.
- Since the relocation of the school the headteacher has established good routines. Classrooms are very well equipped and the adults are becoming adept at getting the best from the environment. Performance management of this new staff is underway and is already having an effect on improving the quality of lessons. The already effective curriculum is under constant

review to ensure that all pupils are included in learning and that none are left out.

- Leaders and managers have thought about how well the school is doing and made plans to improve it, for example by making sure that all who have a management role know exactly what is expected of them.
- Leadership and management are not outstanding because pupils' progress is not yet outstanding and some teaching is not yet good. Furthermore, some staff have not yet received training in how to support pupils' reading and writing.
- The local authority supported the headteacher through the relocation, for example by helping him to change the structure of staffing for the new school. It continues to assist through the provision of services that the school can buy into.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Members of the governing body know the school well. They have ensured that all of the requirements for safeguarding are met and that sensible targets are being used by the headteacher to improve things as quickly as possible. They have ensured that the pupil premium funding will be spent wisely on staffing and training to support developments in reading for those for whom the funding is intended. The Chair visits the school on most days to observe its work and engage in discussions with the headteacher in order to provide challenge and support.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	106278
<b>Local authority</b>	Tameside
<b>Inspection number</b>	400838

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5–14
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	34
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Clayton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robin Elms
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 July 2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	0161 368 6208
<b>Fax number</b>	None
<b>Email address</b>	relms@thomasashton.tameside.sch.uk



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