

Thorpe St Andrew School and Sixth Form

Laundry Lane, Thorpe St Andrew, Norwich, NR7 0XS

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The school provides a very positive environment for learning which successfully supports the excellent academic and personal development of the students.
- Students' achievement is outstanding because they make excellent progress during their time at the school and attain GCSE results that are well above average.
- The sixth form is excellent. The large majority of students make outstanding progress in their subjects and courses and move on to training or higher education.
- Outstanding teaching leads to students' rapid progress. Teachers show that they have high expectations for what all students can achieve.
- The school uses exceptional procedures to set demanding targets for students, track their progress and provide additional support where necessary to ensure all do equally well.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. They feel very safe, are considerate and respectful, and have very positive attitudes to learning.
- The school is led and managed exceptionally well. The principal, senior leaders and governors have overseen consistent and sustained improvements in the quality of teaching and students' achievement.
- A wide range of extra activities and outside visits greatly increase students' enjoyment and experience of the school.
- Governors are fully effective in holding the school to account for students' progress and the quality of teaching.
- The school acknowledges that the key challenge is to make even more teaching outstanding.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 51 lessons, four of which were seen jointly with the deputy principals.
- Discussions were held with the principal, the Chair of the Governing Body, six additional governors, the local authority senior adviser, senior leaders, staff and groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 100 responses to the Parent View online questionnaire and the 45 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors examined a range of evidence, including the school’s analysis of its own performance and resulting improvement and development plan, the systems to track students’ progress, and records relating to behaviour and attendance. They also looked at records of lesson observations by senior leaders, staff performance information, safeguarding documentation and a sample of students’ work.

Inspection team

Stephen Walker, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Piers Ranger	Additional Inspector
Colin Lower	Additional Inspector
Jane Guest	Additional Inspector
Russell Ayling	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average secondary school and serves the eastern side of Norwich and the adjacent rural communities.
- The school operates on a split site and is housed mainly in post-war buildings which have been refurbished. There are a number of recently constructed buildings for performing arts, business and technology. The school has extensive grounds and playing fields.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- A below-average proportion of students are supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students who are in local authority care, from armed services families or known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is broadly average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of Key Stage 4 students take work-related courses at the City College and other training providers.
- The school has a large sixth form which increasingly recruits a growing number of students from other schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on students' excellent progress and high attainment by sharing best practice in order to make even more teaching outstanding across the school.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students achieve exceptionally well during their time at the school. There has been a consistent trend of improvement in students' standards and achievement across the school, particularly in examinations in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Attainment at the end of Year 11 is well above average, which demonstrates excellent progress from students' average starting points in Year 7. Over 72% of students now gain five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, which indicates a continuous raise in attainment in the school. The proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress are high compared with national figures.
- High quality teaching in most subjects, including English and mathematics, is supporting the improvements in the school and enabling students to make excellent progress and gain high grades. Students' current work shows that the majority are making rapid and sustained progress in most subjects and reaching standards which are well above national averages.
- The school has been very successful in ensuring that students develop positive attitudes to learning which are supporting the high standards of work. The school's policy is to enter a number of middle attaining students early in GCSE mathematics, which is motivating them and ensuring that more students are gaining at least a C grade in this subject. Early GCSE entry does not limit the potential of the most able students. Students who study work-related courses on other sites benefit from the practical approach they receive and make excellent progress.
- There has been a similar trend of improvement in the sixth form. Students are, currently, achieving exceptionally well in most AS and A level subjects. The school is very active in advising students to select the most appropriate courses in the sixth form so that there is a very high completion rate in both Years 12 and 13. Most students gain at least three A levels and progress successfully to higher education and training. Predictions for the current year suggest that more students are on track to attain A* to B grades than in previous years and a major focus for the school is to enable even more students to gain the higher grades in all AS and A level subjects.
- Leaders use a well-developed tracking system and a range of support strategies exceptionally well to identify and help any students who are at risk of underachieving. Together with demanding attainment and progress targets in all subjects, this is greatly raising aspirations and supporting impressive improvements in their performance. The school has been successful in accelerating the progress of less-able students in Year 7 and 8 through the 'catch-up' programme.
- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make progress in line with the other students in their classes, because effective additional support from teaching assistants helps them overcome barriers to learning and take part in lessons with the other students. The small numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds also make outstanding progress.
- The school is using pupil premium funding very effectively to provide extra support in English and mathematics, to make sure they progress as well as other students. School data for the present Year 11 students show that the gap between their attainment and that of the other students is narrowing significantly. It has reduced from one GCSE grade to less than half a grade in English and mathematics since 2013, and more of these students are on track to gain higher grades.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The work seen in lessons and students' books reflects teaching that is consistently at least good and often outstanding in all age groups, including the sixth form, with the result that the students are making exceptional progress over time in most subjects. Students have excellent attitudes to learning and are eager to improve their work and grades.
- Students respond well to the very clear instructions from teachers, so they are well prepared for examinations and make rapid progress in lessons. The teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is reflected in the students' engagement in learning. Clearly defined tasks and a greater emphasis on the completion of work have ensured that boys are making excellent progress in line with the girls.
- Teachers encourage students to work without constant adult support. Students benefit from the frequent opportunities to undertake their own research after the teacher has given an outline of the topic. Solving problems in groups also develops their social and thinking skills, and helps them listen to other students' ideas.
- The supportive atmosphere in lessons and excellent quality of planning ensure that students are fully engaged in their learning. Students behave very well in all classes and this provides an ideal environment for learning.
- Students show great enthusiasm and sustain high levels of concentration because lessons involve a range of interesting and meaningful activities. Students learn particularly well because activities are very well matched to their different abilities. Teachers are ensuring that they give all students demanding and achievable tasks that help them learn.
- There are excellent examples of marking across the school which commend good work but also make sure that students know exactly what they have to do to improve it and gain the higher grades. Many teachers encourage students to assess work themselves to help them understand the marking schemes of the examinations.
- Students who require additional help with their work are very well supported and challenged by teaching assistants in class or withdrawn on a regular basis in small groups for extra help in reading, writing and numeracy. This helps identified students to catch up with their work if they are in danger of underachieving.
- Teachers generally ask questions skilfully to check students' understanding and challenge them to develop their understanding further. Supportive questioning enables most students to contribute to class discussions without embarrassment, and many teachers are very skilled at getting students to explain their understanding of concepts to the rest of the class.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. This is the case in lessons and around the school, and it contributes to a calm and orderly environment. Students consistently meet the school's clear expectations and, typically, students respond well to teachers' good use of praise and encouragement to promote high standards of behaviour. Students want to learn and this has a strong impact on their progress in lessons.
- Students as a whole are highly proficient in managing their own behaviour. For example, they

can be trusted to work on their own, move around the corridors and socialise at break and lunchtimes with a reasonable level of supervision. Rare incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with extremely well by staff and are not allowed to disrupt the learning of the other students.

- Students are polite and courteous to staff and each other, and this has a very positive effect on learning. They learn and flourish in an atmosphere of respect and dignity. The house system helps younger students fit into this large school quickly and feel welcomed by the other students. Senior students, including the sixth formers, act as good role models and have opportunities to support the younger students by helping in lessons and acting as mentors.
- Students are very aware of the different forms of possible bullying such as cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to sex, gender, race and disability. Although bullying of any kind is extremely rare, students, parents and carers say any unkind behaviour such as name-calling is dealt with quickly and effectively.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Governors make sure that the arrangements for safeguarding fully meet current national requirements and underpin the school's very caring approach. Students feel very safe and display an excellent understanding of the issues relating to safety. They talk confidently about how they would keep themselves safe in a variety of situations, such as when using the internet and talking to strangers. They confirmed that they are given detailed information on sex education and the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs.
- Attendance is above average and reflects students' real enjoyment of the school. The vast majority of students are very proud of their school and speak highly of their educational experience. All students adhere to the uniform regulations and look after their school buildings and grounds.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The principal is providing exceptionally effective and robust leadership, which is driving the continuous improvements in the school. He is well supported by the senior leadership team in encouraging both the academic and personal development of the students. Staff are encouraged to take on school-wide responsibilities which enable them to contribute to its improvement.
- Leaders have a very accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. The improvement and development plan is a comprehensive working document, with clear actions and targets that are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching and the rate of students' progress. Leaders take strong and effective action to challenge and support any underperforming subject areas.
- Senior leaders and curriculum leaders are very effectively leading the improvement of teaching. The rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching are successful in promoting students' excellent progress. Staff are continually reflecting on how to improve their practice, although leaders acknowledge that the key challenge is to make even more teaching outstanding by sharing best practice. The leadership of the sixth form is excellent in supporting the all-round development of the students and ensuring that they have a balanced study programme.
- Regular lesson observations by senior staff lead to clear feedback to teachers on strengths and areas for improvement. Judgements on the quality of teaching are accurate and focus on improving students' learning and progress. The system of setting targets for teachers is rigorous

in ensuring that teachers are held to account for the progress of their students.

- The school has very good links with the local authority, which uses some of the school's excellent practice to help other schools. For example, the principal is involved in supporting other secondary schools in Norfolk, and the school is the venue for the Norfolk Leadership Academy and regularly provides courses in middle management for other schools. It also works very closely with neighbouring primary schools through the Thorpe St Andrew Educational Partnership.
- The school has developed a first-rate curriculum which is relevant to students' needs and includes an extensive choice of academic and work-related courses, particularly in the sixth form. All students are provided with comprehensive careers education to help them make informed choices.
- A wide range of outside visits very effectively extends the work carried out in lessons, as do the large number of activities beyond the school timetable, which greatly increase students' enjoyment and experience of the school. They contribute exceptionally well to students' achievements and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are actively involved in decision making in the school and the Student Senate's proposals for improving the school uniform have recently been accepted by the governors.

■ **The governance of the school:**

The governing body is well informed about the school's progress and areas for development. Its members are fully involved in monitoring progress and in holding the leadership and staff to account. They have been very active in supporting and monitoring the school improvement and development plan. Senior leaders ensure that governors have a good understanding about students' achievement and the quality of teaching so that they can make confident decisions on staff pay rises and promotion. All are strongly committed to tackling discrimination and ensuring that pupils from all backgrounds and of all abilities have an equal chance to succeed. Governors oversee the use of the pupil premium funding and ensure that it is spent effectively to support eligible students. Governors work very successfully with the principal to gain additional funding for new buildings, including the new sports centre.

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

Unique reference number	121180
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	425394

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1809
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	326
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Linda Steynor
Principal	Ian Clayton
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2008
Telephone number	01603 497711
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