

Thomas Wolsey School

Defoe Road, Ipswich, IP1 6SG

Inspection dates 27–28 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide outstanding leadership and management. They receive good support from teachers with leadership responsibilities, the governing body and academy trustees in improving the school. Together, they have successfully sustained outstanding teaching and achievement since the last inspection.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well by school leaders.
- Leaders have ensured that the support for schools provided by the outreach service is highly valued by headteachers.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons and across the school is outstanding. They have excellent attitudes to learning, which are reflected in high levels of attendance and their eagerness to participate in all the school offers.
- Pupils learn exceptionally well because the quality of teaching over time is outstanding. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of each pupil. They use this information exceptionally well to plan activities which extend the thinking of all pupils.
- Support assistants and therapists provide excellent support for pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers to set the highest expectations of pupils' learning and behaviour.
- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. They make rapid progress in communication, literacy and numeracy skills during their time in school. The oldest pupils achieve a wide range of relevant examination courses and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Outstanding teaching and exceptionally well-planned learning opportunities enable children in the Early Years to make outstanding progress and stay extremely safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 10 lessons to determine the impact of teaching on pupils' learning over time. Nearly all observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders and most teachers were seen.
- Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, including children's learning journeys in the Early Years, and heard a few pupils read.
- Meetings were held with senior and subject leaders, a member of the governing body, a representative of the academy and two different groups of pupils. Inspectors held informal discussions with a few pupils at break time and lunchtime.
- Inspectors scrutinised 14 responses to Parent View (the online questionnaire for parents) including three comments. They also took account of 18 responses to the school's most recent survey of parents. Inspectors considered the 61 completed questionnaires returned by staff.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documentation, including records of pupils' progress over time, records of progress of children in the Early Years, attendance figures, incidents of behaviour, safeguarding policies, the self-evaluation summary, the school development plan and minutes of the governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Aileen Thomas

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thomas Wolsey School is a day special school which converted as an academy two weeks before its previous inspection. Nearly half of all pupils have physical disabilities and the remainder have a wide range of complex needs including severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, speech language and communication needs, medical needs, sensory impairments and autism.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Most pupils are White British and a low proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- An above average proportion of pupils, 30%, are eligible for pupil premium funding. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- Of the 85 pupils on roll, 45 are dual registered with their local mainstream school or nursery. The school's outreach service supports these pupils as well as others who are not on Thomas Wolsey's roll.
- The few children in the Nursery and Reception years attend on a part-time basis.
- The oldest pupils attend alternative provision at Suffolk One College, Suffolk New College or Otley College for half a day per week for part of their education.
- The school hosts Suffolk's communication aids resources centre service and the information and communication technology assessment service.
- There have been a number of changes since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher was appointed as acting headteacher in September 2013 and a new headteacher was appointed in September 2014. The outreach service is currently under re-organisation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Complete the development and implementation of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements within the agreed timescales specified in the school development plan.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The new headteacher, with excellent support from senior leaders, is providing strong and purposeful leadership. The school is successfully meeting the area for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Leaders have ensured that staff use the information about pupils' progress to identify how the learning and progress of individuals can be increased further. They have also developed the support and advice offered to mainstream schools on how to maximise the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- All leaders, with good support from governors and trustees, are continuing to promote a culture of excellence in teaching and learning where outstanding behaviour continues to flourish across the school. Staff morale is high, as reflected in their questionnaire returns, where they all said they were proud to be a member of the school.
- Pupils on dual placements and those from other mainstream schools benefit greatly from the work of the outreach service.
- Outstanding leadership of teaching is based on rigorous arrangements for managing the performance of teachers and support assistants. Senior leaders and teachers with leadership responsibilities regularly monitor the impact of teaching on pupils' learning. They identify strengths and any areas where further improvements can be made, and provide effective opportunities for further training and support. This has resulted in the continuous rise in the proportion of outstanding teaching since the previous inspection.
- The school's view of itself is accurate and based securely in the outcomes of monitoring all aspects of its work. Teachers with leadership responsibilities are continuously reviewing and evaluating their work to sustain high quality teaching and high achievement. They use the outcomes well to influence the priorities for whole-school development.
- Outstanding leadership of Early Years has resulted in outstanding teaching and excellent learning opportunities, enabling children to settle into their routines quickly and make rapid progress in all areas of learning.
- Leaders ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities to participate in and enjoy all the school offers. As a result, pupils of all abilities are making at least good progress and many are making outstanding progress from their different starting points. Strong teamwork between teachers, support staff, therapists and health care professionals, particularly in planning specialist programmes, ensure that all pupils with physical disabilities and more complex needs fully engage with learning.
- The school is most effective in tackling discrimination of any kind, which is reflected in the excellent relationships pupils have with one another.
- The curriculum is well planned with a strong emphasis on the development of the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy together with physical development and personal, social and emotional development. Older pupils now benefit from more opportunities to take a wider range of examination courses since the previous inspection. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their lives through careers guidance, the programme of work related learning and through the development of independence skills. As a result, pupils make informed choices about their future pathways.
- The new curriculum continues to develop, for example with a stronger emphasis on the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) and more opportunities for pupils to use and apply mathematics in real-life situations. New systems for assessing pupils' progress within each area of the curriculum are still developing with planned consultations with other special schools to agree a common approach to assessment.

- The curriculum, teaching and the school's warm welcoming ethos promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development extremely well, including British values. For example, in an assembly pupils learned about Scottish culture and traditions in the celebration of St Andrew's Day. Pupils have many opportunities to reflect, and the consistent use of praise and encouragement by staff rapidly builds pupils' confidence and self-esteem. Pupils learn about other faiths and cultural traditions through the celebration of different festivals, through visit to different places of worship, and through subjects such as art, music, religious education and personal, social and health education.
- Leaders make good use of the additional primary sports funding to provide a range of additional physical education programmes including lunchtime and after-school clubs, such as the wheelchair football lunchtime club and after-school swimming sessions. This has led to an increase in pupils' participation in sport and higher achievement in physical education.
- Good use of Year 7 catch-up funding to provide additional one-one and small groups support for literacy and numeracy is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.
- Good use is made of pupil premium funding to provide additional support and therapies for disadvantaged pupils, enabling them to make the same progress as their classmates.
- The school maintains strong links with parents, who are very supportive of the school. They feel valued, welcomed and fully involved in supporting the work of the school in ensuring the best for each of their children.
- The academy representative is providing good support and challenge for the school through termly visits to review its work and set clear targets for further improvement.
- The promotion of safeguarding is outstanding. Leaders make sure that full assessments of potential risks are carried out, especially when older pupils attend local colleges for part of their education, and when all pupils participate in outside activities. Staff are vigilant in maintaining high levels of supervision and engagement in pupils' learning activities. Leaders carefully monitor attendance levels and pupils' behaviour when attending colleges for part of their education.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are providing good oversight of the school's work and strong support for the staff, especially through regular visits to the school. They have carried out a full audit of their skills and have an accurate view of their own strengths and areas for development. They have an equally thorough knowledge of the quality of teaching and its impact on learning through visits, receiving regular reports from senior leaders and through their developing knowledge of data. They use this information well to influence school priorities for development and to effectively oversee the arrangements for managing the performance of the new headteacher. They use the information on the quality of teaching to carefully consider how the best teaching can be rewarded.
 - Governors have good oversight of how the school is supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development with planned meetings to consider in more detail how British values are promoted. Governors are effectively holding the school to account for its additional spending on pupil premium, primary physical education and sport funding and Year 7 catch-up funding to ensure value for money. They also make sure that the legal requirements for safeguarding are fully met. They check that the procedures for vetting staff and visitors are rigorous and that all policies and training in safeguarding are up-to-date.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. There have been no exclusions in recent years. Behaviour in lessons is exemplary. Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent, as is the ethos of mutual respect. As a result, lessons always flow smoothly pupils really want to learn. They take great pride in their achievements, as shown in the rapturous and spontaneous applause for a pupil who read out a Robert Burns poem during the St Andrew's Day assembly and in the neat presentation of their work.

- Pupils' behaviour around the school, on school trips and when attending alternative provision at college is excellent. They show respect and courtesy towards others. They are consistently well behaved, helpful and supportive of one another during break times and lunchtimes.
- Pupils' outstanding behaviour has a very strong impact on their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as they increase their confidence, levels of maturity and independence skills as they progress through the school.
- Parents, pupils, staff and governors expressed very positive views about pupils' behaviour and how rapidly the few pupils with more challenging behaviours make progress in self-control.
- Children in the Early Years behave exceptionally well because all staff promote their learning and wellbeing most effectively in all activities.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are rigorous. Any unexplained absence is thoroughly checked through immediate home contact with follow up home visits where necessary. Good attendance is rewarded across the school. As a result, those who are well enough attend school regularly and are always eager to start work.
- Systems for assessing any potential risks to pupils who attend college places for part of their education, when pupils participate in visits and when they engage in school activities, are robust. High levels of staff supervision ensure pupils' safety.
- There are very few incidents of bullying. Parents and pupils say that when such incidents occur they are always dealt with effectively. Pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying.
- Pupils use practical resources, computers and electronic switches for communication safely. They handle cutlery safely and abide by safe rules of play in physical education.
- Pupils are developing their awareness of the harmful effects of alcohol, smoking and drugs on the body.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The impact of teaching on pupils' learning is at least good and usually outstanding. The proportion of outstanding teaching across the school has risen sharply since the previous inspection. This is reflected in the school's information about the progress pupils make and their monitoring of teaching over time. As a result of outstanding teaching, pupils' learning is exceptional, as seen in examples of their work. For example, pupils rapidly improved their use of punctuation grammar and spelling in their written work because teachers gave them consistently good feedback on how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve further.
- Teachers' very detailed knowledge of the individual learning needs of each pupil was seen in highly individual learning activities for each pupil which are set at exactly the right level and which also challenge their thinking. For example, in a science lesson, pupils investigated forces of pulling and pushing as the teacher showed images of swings in a park, bicycle pedals, a pram and a Christmas cracker to promote pupils' understanding of pushing and pulling. More-able pupils were then given a task to investigate frictional forces, while the least able investigated the forces which makes a ball roll or makes a toy car go faster. All pupils remained focused and made rapid gains in their understanding of the physical forces.
- The excellent support of therapists and support assistants was seen in three communication lessons. Different pupils were encouraged to use a variety of learning resources, including switches, lap tops, eye pads and real objects to rapidly develop their communication and social interaction skills. Therapists and support assistants worked closely with the class teachers to extend the learning of each individual pupil through, for example, the consistent use of signing and symbols and the consistent management of

behaviour. Pupils' outstanding behaviour, as seen in most lessons, has a very positive impact on their learning and progress.

- Support assistants provide excellent support for disadvantaged pupils and those with more complex learning needs, such as severe learning difficulties. In a Key Stage 1 lesson, support assistants were working exceptionally well together to support the learning of these pupils in identifying different sounds. They used well-chosen resources, such as a mirror, to provide instant feedback to pupils on how they were making the correct sound.
- The teaching of basic skills of numeracy, communication and literacy are at least good and often outstanding. For example, as a result of particularly strong teaching of literacy, pupils make rapid gains in using reading and writing which are reflected in their reading records and in their written work.

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Pupils' attainment on entry is well below average and, given the nature and complexity of their disabilities and special educational needs, it remains low in comparison with age-related expectations. Nevertheless, pupils make outstanding progress from their low starting points. Nearly all parents are pleased with their child's progress. All recorded comments about progress were extremely positive.
- The school's accurate information about the progress pupils are making shows that there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls or those with more complex needs, and their classmates.
- Children in the Early Years make outstanding progress in all areas of learning because teaching and learning opportunities are outstanding.
- As pupils move through the school, they continue to make rapid progress. Pupils who are dual registered make the same progress as their peers because the outreach service provides highly valued support and guidance for staff in mainstream schools to meet their different needs.
- Pupils with additional special educational needs such as speech, language and communication needs, sensory impairments or autism make the same outstanding progress as their classmates. This is because support staff therapist and teachers use their detailed knowledge of each pupil to provide additional resources such as visual timetables, symbols, electronic switches and tablet computers to facilitate learning. Similarly, pupils who speak English as an additional language make equally outstanding progress as their classmates for the same reasons.
- Disadvantaged pupils make the same outstanding progress as their classmates in communication, literacy and numeracy because pupil premium funding is used effectively to provide additional support for their learning in these areas.
- Pupils participation in physical education activities, such as swimming, has increased significantly as a result of good use of additional primary sports funding to provide more lunchtime and after-school activities.
- Year 7 pupils make rapid gains in literacy and numeracy because the additional catch-up funding is used well to provide more support for pupils' learning.
- Nearly all pupils make outstanding progress in English and communication skills because the school is highly effective in supporting communication through the use of technological aids. This, in turn, strongly supports pupils' outstanding personal development.
- The most-able pupils make the same outstanding progress as their classmates because staff ensure they provide challenging activities which extend their thinking further.

- At Key Stage 4, pupils make outstanding progress towards their academic and vocational examination courses with the proportion gaining at least one qualification in English and mathematics remaining consistently high year-on-year. They make outstanding progress in work-related learning and independence skills, and while attending alternative provision at local colleges. This prepares them exceptionally well to successfully transfer to college or sixth form provision when they leave school. Since the last inspection, all pupils have transferred to college or sixth form provisions and all have sustained their placements one year on.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- The achievement of children of Nursery and Reception age is outstanding. There are no significant differences in the progress that different children make from their very low starting points on entry. Those with physical disabilities and more complex special educational needs make outstanding progress in all areas of learning. This is demonstrated particularly well in the school's data and learning journeys, where rapid gains in children's communication, language, physical development and personal social and emotional development are clearly recorded.
- Outstanding leadership has ensured that parents are fully informed of the progress their child is making and involved as much as possible in supporting their child's learning. Exceptionally strong leadership has sustained outstanding teaching and the development of excellent learning opportunities to enable each child to make outstanding progress. Children of Nursery and Reception age are provided with exceptionally well-planned and resourced activities to meet each child's individual needs. All staff make excellent use of electronic communication aids, signs, symbols and real life objects to support children's development of communication, language and social interaction. Excellent use is made of specialist resources, such as hoists and standing frames, to support children's physical development and wellbeing.
- Teamwork between teachers, support staff and therapists in providing well-established routines, such as physical support and the use of modelling, is very strong. For example, in a lesson on movement, children were encouraged to move in different ways, some by wheelchair, others in a walking frame and a few independently. All adults encouraged the children to move as well as they could, constantly praising their efforts and performance. This ensured the physical and emotional well-being and safety of all children and promoted their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, exceptionally well as they gained rapidly in confidence.

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	137838
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	448936

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	85
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Evan Edwards
Headteacher	Rupe Hosie
Date of previous school inspection	23 February 2012
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