

Townley Grammar School

Townley Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7AB

Inspection dates	25–26 November 2015
Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
16 to 19 study programmes	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The headteacher and senior leaders are relentless in their drive for the very best outcomes for pupils at the academy.
- Governors are exceptionally committed and bring their broad knowledge and expertise to benefit the academy and its pupils.
- Leaders at all levels are very committed to ensuring that the academy provides excellent care and support for all pupils. This enables all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs, to thrive, enjoy their education and excel.
- Teaching is outstanding. Teachers are passionate about their subjects, have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. They support the leadership of the academy in its ambitious vision of success and the very best for all pupils.
- Teachers demonstrate expert understanding of how pupils learn. They use this to plan challenging, interesting and motivating lessons.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well in lessons and around the academy site. They are polite and engaging. They fully appreciate what the academy offers them and have excellent attitudes to learning.
- Senior and middle leaders work closely to plan and implement a challenging academic curriculum, which offers a very wide range of subjects. Staff also provide the richest possible choice of extra-curricular activities, which enables pupils to develop wider skills and flourish.
- Sixth form provision is outstanding. The sixth form team is highly ambitious for the learners, and skilfully helps them to succeed. The sixth form provides a vibrant, forward-looking experience and prepares learners very well for their next stage in life.
- Staff take every opportunity to promote the personal development and welfare of pupils. As a result, pupils explore ideas and viewpoints openly, and are articulate and caring young citizens.
- The arrangements the academy makes for the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils are exceptional. As a result, pupils are collaborative and supportive of each other. They have a clear understanding of moral issues and confidently probe national and global topics.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that assessment information at Key Stage 3 accurately and consistently reflects the strong progress the pupils are making in their learning over time.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and governors have the highest expectations of all aspects of the academy's work. Leaders at all levels are very ambitious for the pupils and the academy; they plan for continuous improvement creatively and resolve issues promptly as they arise.
- Senior leaders and governors evaluate the quality of the education provided by the academy rigorously and accurately.
- A culture of achievement and enjoyment permeates the academy. As a result, pupils do exceptionally well. Vulnerable pupils and those who are disadvantaged do as well as others in the academy. Leaders target additional funding for these pupils effectively; this enables them to achieve better than other pupils nationally.
- The curriculum is planned exceptionally well to enable pupils to study a very wide range of subjects. Leaders review the curriculum periodically to ensure that it is always best suited to the needs of pupils currently in the academy. As a result, pupils build key skills securely and expand their interests. Teachers set challenging tasks that capture pupils' interest and motivate them to take pride in their work.
- The planning and delivery of professional development for teachers is excellent. A structured programme is enhanced by opportunities for teachers to work together to improve their teaching, and they do so enthusiastically. For example, they share best practice with each other through regular 'fifteen minute forums'.
- Middle leaders are extremely positive about their work. They work closely with senior leaders and each other to provide targeted support for individual teachers and pupils. The enthusiasm of all teachers is demonstrable; it enables pupils to learn exceptionally well and secure outstanding outcomes.
- Creative, artistic and sporting activities extend pupils' wider knowledge and understanding extremely well. Girls have every opportunity to participate in a wide variety of sports, including those that challenge gender stereotyping, for example, cricket, football and tag rugby. An extensive variety of clubs, mainly organised by the pupils themselves, encourage pupils to collaborate and be ambitious for their futures.
- Leaders ensure that pupils have a very good knowledge of, and respect for, fundamental British values. They encourage pupils to reflect on significant issues, including the rule of law and British institutions, in assemblies, tutor time discussion and personal development sessions. As a result, pupils are noticeably respectful of a wide variety of views. They fully understand the importance of tackling discrimination and promoting equality.
- Links with a wide variety of outside organisations are well established. These links serve to increase the range of additional experiences that the pupils can enjoy. Pupils benefit from work experience tailored to their interests, including experience abroad.
- The academy is highly successful in enabling pupils to manage change exceptionally well, which builds their resilience. For example, leaders introduce pupils to change situations through having a new form tutor every one to two years.
- Leaders also ensure that the curriculum covers topics such as female genital mutilation and extremism in an age-appropriate way.
- **The governance of the academy**
 - Governors know the academy exceptionally well. They are very clear about their collective role and active in their contribution to the success of the academy.
 - Individual governors have link roles to subject areas and attend annual subject review meetings. As a result, governors collectively are well informed about the progress of current pupils, and this enables them to hold leaders properly to account. It helps to promote exceptional outcomes for pupils.
 - Since academy conversion, the governing body has reduced its size in order to be more responsive to the needs of the academy. This enables all governors to be knowledgeable about all aspects of provision and to attend all committee meetings. The pay committee scrutinises the performance management processes and pay progression of teachers closely.
 - The recruitment of new governors is undertaken carefully to enhance the experience and skills they can bring. This also ensures that the pupils benefit from the expertise that governors bring, for example in higher education and business.

- Governors hold the headteacher to account through their questioning at committee meetings and full governor meetings, and through a rigorous performance management process. The Chair is active in ensuring that the governors perform their role extremely well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff have up-to-date training on the latest statutory guidance and there is an ongoing programme of relevant training. As a result, the academy staff make any necessary referrals to external agencies quickly. Leaders work effectively with other agencies to promote the safety of pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Throughout the academy and in almost all lessons, teachers demonstrate exceptional subject knowledge and passionately enthuse their pupils with a love of learning.
- Teachers consistently use questioning expertly to promote learning. They also respond well to pupils' questions, which are plentiful, sometimes withholding the answer in order to prompt further discussion and deepen understanding.
- Teachers put a lot of thought into their excellent planning. They have high expectations of their pupils and plan lessons that are rich in subject content, challenging and fun. Teachers cleverly structure lessons to ensure all pupils progress. As a result, pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes and are aware of how much they are learning. In some lessons, they express disappointment that the lesson is over and, unprompted, say they want to continue their work at home.
- Pupils receive feedback on their learning from teachers, and each other, in a wide range of ways. This helps to deepen their understanding of what and how they learn. Staff encourage pupils to learn from each other. One pupil commented that, when giving feedback to each other, they 'use the language of criticism in a way that is impersonal, polite and accurate'.
- Pupils love learning and are resilient because teachers create an atmosphere where pupils feel safe to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Teachers set challenging homework regularly and effectively to support pupils' learning. In some cases, pupils decide which work to do as homework and which to do in lessons. This encourages them to think about time management, the type of work they are doing, and where best to do it. Consequently, they also build skills for later life.
- Pupils are encouraged to read widely and as a result, their reading is strong in all subjects. Teachers insist that pupils use the correct technical language for their subject, which pupils do fluently and consistently across all subjects.
- A particular strength of the academy is its encouragement of STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics). Sixth form 'STEM leaders' work with 'STEM ambassadors' in Years 7 to 11 to promote the uptake of these subjects and widen engagement in STEM initiatives. As a result, the uptake of physics at A level in 2014 has increased significantly.
- Pupils' natural curiosity is encouraged and enhanced by debates and discussions, which teachers plan as part of everyday life. Pupils proactively ask questions, want to find out more and take every opportunity to do so. On one occasion, pupils confidently asked an inspector to contribute to a discussion they were having and engaged him in a detailed conversation, which deepened their understanding.
- Parents are extremely positive about the academy. They are encouraged to express their views and receive regular communications about how well their children are doing through the academy planner, progress reports, regular parents' consultation evenings, and an 'expectation evening' which is held at the beginning of each key stage.
- Teachers take every opportunity in lessons to challenge stereotypes and broaden pupils' understanding of wider issues. As a result, pupils of all ages talk with understanding about sensitive topics and treat controversial views with respect.
- Leaders and teachers monitor the progress of all pupils rigorously. If they see a risk of decline in performance in a year group, group of pupils or subject, leaders take quick and effective action to remedy it. For example, the head of English has established clear systems to ensure that marking at Key Stage 3 is accurate and that information used to check how well pupils are doing is reliable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Staff give utmost prominence to the personal development and welfare of pupils. As a result, pupils are articulate and enthusiastic, feel safe and are aware of risks.
- In lessons, teachers promote pupils' well-being by linking their subject to wider issues whenever possible. For example, a discussion in drama raised pupils' awareness of possible ways to interpret the word 'bullying'.
- Regular assemblies tackle topical issues promptly, imaginatively and appropriately, for example on moral courage in the wake of a recent terror attack. The academy successfully celebrates diversity and promotes respect. As a result, pupils are tolerant, open-minded and form excellent relationships.
- The breadth of extra-curricular provision of clubs and societies is superb, with over 50 clubs running weekly. Pupils take full advantage of these opportunities and appreciate the contribution they make to both their learning and enjoyment. One pupil said, 'If you can think of it, they will run a club on it.'
- Leaders and teachers are innovative and creative in providing pupils with opportunities to keep safe. The academy has an online service where pupils can report concerns anonymously, which enables staff to know about and respond to emerging issues. Leaders actively raise awareness on safe use of the internet and social media; for example, an assembly dealt head on with the issue of chain emails. Older pupils are 'digital leaders' and provide advice and guidance to younger pupils on how to use the internet and social media safely. Risk assessments are thorough and up to date.
- Bullying is rare and teachers deal with any incident swiftly and effectively. Pupils are knowledgeable about different types of bullying, and about how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They report that the academy is supportive if they have a problem, and that they always know who to approach for help. Pupils are thoughtful and caring towards each other.
- The social, moral, cultural and spiritual development of pupils in the academy is excellent. Teachers take every opportunity to enhance the breadth of pupils' thinking and understanding both in lessons and around the academy. For example, teachers lead discussions on morality in English, and, in a poetry competition, encourage pupils to consider what it feels like to be foreign.
- Pupils have many opportunities to develop strong leadership skills through, for example, attending a leadership summit in India. Closer to home, pupils participate actively in the academy council, student leadership and prefect structures – all of which develop their skills for future life.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- The behaviour of pupils throughout the academy is impeccable and this is a key strength of the academy's provision.
- Pupils' attendance throughout the academy is very good and well above national averages. This is because they enjoy school and want to attend. The academy is rigorous in targeting punctuality and attendance, which ensures pupils are on time and arrive ready to learn.
- Teachers expect pupils to arrive promptly to lessons and to settle quickly in order to learn. Pupils do so, and follow instructions consistently well across all subjects and year groups. This contributes to the excellent progress that they make. At the same time, staff do not encourage pupils to be overly compliant. Teachers expect pupils to form their own views. Consequently, pupils are open-minded and enjoy exploring alternative viewpoints.
- Poor behaviour is not an issue at the academy because pupils generally are so involved in their learning, and have such respect for their teachers, that it would not occur to them to misbehave.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils enter the academy with attainment that is above the national average. From these strong starting points, they make excellent progress in all subjects. Almost all pupils achieve five or more GCSEs at grade C or above and pupils' rates of progress in English and mathematics far exceed the national average.
- At the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment is exceptional. In 2015, 62% of GCSE grades were at A*/A. In many subjects, for example mathematics, history, geography, computer science, dance, DT textiles, information and communication technology (ICT), music and religious studies, most pupils achieved grades A* to A. In other subjects, a very large majority of pupils achieved A* to B grades, and in drama, DT Textiles, ICT and physical education, all pupils achieved these grades.
- Academy staff check how well pupils are doing increasingly robustly in all year groups and in all subjects. In Key Stage 3, the academy's information shows that nearly all pupils are either meeting or exceeding their targets. Leaders and teachers analyse how well pupils are doing regularly. They identify quickly when pupils are not doing as well as expected and teachers provide effective support promptly.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs do as well as, and in some cases better than, other pupils in the academy. They also do much better than other pupils nationally. This is because the academy provides excellent targeted support and individual intervention. For example, the academy's student services facility enables these pupils to thrive and progress, in line with or above expectations. The academy uses pupil premium funding very effectively to enable pupils to make rapid progress.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Staff encourage pupils to consider a very wide range of possibilities and to aim high. They actively challenge gender stereotyping in career choices; as a result, currently 25 former pupils are studying computing at university.
- The academy tackles pockets of underperformance in a minority of subjects swiftly and effectively. As a result, pupils make consistently strong progress in all subjects and at all stages. A dip in attainment at A level in English literature in 2015 was addressed promptly. Very effective department leadership in English has quickly ensured that pupils' progress in all year groups is now strong and continues its upward trend of improvement.
- On occasion, information on how well pupils are doing in Key Stage 3 has not been reliable because teachers' feedback was not accurate. Leaders have taken swift action to improve the standard of assessment and information and they rightly acknowledge that this continues to be a priority.
- The academy currently enters pupils for the iGCSE examination in English language. The grades awarded in 2015 showed strong progress in line with previous years. A very large majority of pupils gained one of the highest grades, with 80% of grades at A* to B, and 45% of grades at A* to A. However, these results are not technically recognised by The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). This arises from a coding mismatch between two versions of the iGCSE specification. Therefore, the academy's iGCSE results for English language in 2015 are not included in the Department for Education's performance tables. The academy is currently disputing this.

16 to 19 study programmes

are outstanding

- The leadership of the sixth form is exceptional. The sixth form team, expertly led by an assistant headteacher, are highly aspirational for all learners. They ensure that learners focus on making the very best of their time. An atmosphere of professionalism, enjoyment of learning, support and challenge permeates all aspects of the sixth form.
- Sixth form learners do very well over time. The proportions achieving the higher A-level grades are much greater than the national average. The strong upward trend of improvement in A-level results is continuing and learners' progress in academic courses is significantly better than national averages. Leaders intervene quickly and effectively if progress dips. For example, in physics the number of learners gaining A* to B grades increased from 38% in 2014 to 92% in 2015.
- Learners choose what to study from a wide range of courses, which leaders plan carefully. The academy provides appropriate options to enable all learners to make excellent progress. As a result, the retention rate on courses is very good.

- The very high quality of teaching, learning and assessment evident throughout the academy is also typical in sixth form lessons. Teachers expertly probe learners' learning, while giving them every opportunity to gain confidence and develop their understanding. Other common characteristics in sixth form lessons include teachers' excellent subject knowledge, the high quality of presentation expected of learners' work and learners' sustained concentration.
- The academy's global learning programme enables learners to lead on global issues in the academy. They chair a global learning committee with learners from different year groups, which focuses on the academy's response to world events. This raises awareness and understanding of current affairs for all learners. It enables all learners to understand the complexities of the world in which they live and prepares them very well for life in modern Britain.
- The academy's 'rounded and grounded' programme of sixth form extra-curricular enrichment studies is exceptional. It encourages learning for pleasure and offers many exciting opportunities to pursue interests and prepare learners for later life. Sixth form learners choose from a wide range of possible courses, including DIY, philosophy, music, and a discussion group on 'If I ran a country...'. Learners enthusiastically participate in these sessions, debating and discussing with intelligence and understanding.
- Leaders are highly aspirational for their learners. They go out of their way to create future opportunities for sixth formers, for example by forging links with higher education establishments and business partners. This ensures that learners know about and apply successfully to a range of prestigious opportunities, including highly competitive apprenticeships and university places. Expert careers advice supports the academy's drive to ensure learners have every opportunity to succeed.

School details

Unique reference number	137769
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10001211

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of learners in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1502
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	453
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Paterson
Headteacher	Desmond Deehan
Telephone number	020 8304 8311
Website	http://townleygrammar.org.uk/
Email address	admin@townleygrammar.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The academy is a much larger than average selective academy for girls aged 11 to 18. It admits boys in the sixth form and around 35 boys join the academy each year.
- Since the last inspection, the predecessor school, also called Townley Grammar School for Girls, converted to become an academy on 1 January 2012.
- A very small minority of pupils, around 12%, are eligible for pupil premium funding. There are no pupils eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding.
- A large majority of pupils, around 67%, are from ethnic minority groups, with the largest ethnic group being Black African.
- Very few pupils are disabled or have any form of special educational needs.
- The academy uses an additional provider, Pathways The Link (medical provision) to support pupils when required.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 54 lessons and scrutinised pupils' work.
- They held meeting with pupils, governors (including the Chair of the Governing Body), the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders, teachers and parents.
- Parents' views were also considered through analysis of 443 responses to Ofsted's parent questionnaire, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the academy site.
- The inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised a range of information, including information on pupils' achievement.
- Inspectors looked at planning and monitoring documentation. They also examined minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke on the telephone to the headteacher of alternative provision commissioned by the academy.
- The views of staff were analysed through the 54 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The views of pupils were analysed through the 29 responses to the pupil questionnaire, the meetings held with pupils and informal discussions with them around the academy site.

Inspection team

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