

Thomas's Clapham

Broomwood Road, Wandsworth, London SW11 6JZ

Inspection dates

23–25 January 2018

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
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The proprietors, headteacher and senior leaders are highly ambitious for pupils' achievement. Together with colleagues, they make continual improvements to the school, ensuring that pupils achieve extremely well.
- Teaching and assessment are outstanding. Teachers have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. They enable pupils of all abilities to make rapid progress across all subjects. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to produce longer pieces of creative writing.
- Safeguarding is effective. All staff receive regular training and updates to ensure that they are aware of the latest guidance.
- Staff benefit greatly in their work from the valuable staff training programme and from cooperation with colleagues within the family of Thomas's schools.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They are extremely polite and friendly. They have excellent attitudes to learning, work well together and are motivated to succeed.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- Staff provide exceptional pastoral care. They are extremely effective in promoting the welfare of pupils, who feel safe and secure as a result. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy.
- Leaders ensure that the lively and stimulating curriculum meets pupils' needs very effectively. Pupils have many opportunities to develop their skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects.
- Excellent leadership and teaching in the early years ensure that children make rapid progress and are extremely well prepared to start Year 1.
- Governance is effective. Governors are confident in challenging and holding leaders to account for the school's performance.
- The proprietors and senior leaders have ensured that all the independent school standards and the statutory requirements of the early years are met.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide more opportunities for pupils to develop their creative writing skills in longer pieces of work across a range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- The proprietors, headteacher and senior leaders are very ambitious and have high expectations for pupils and staff. Their highly effective leadership inspires a committed team of staff. Together, they have ensured that the school continues to improve, and that all the independent school standards are met.
- Since the last inspection, there has been a consistent focus on improving the quality of teaching and ensuring pupils' safety and welfare. There have been new staff appointments, reorganisation of leadership responsibilities and highly effective induction and mentoring of staff. All of these measures have made a strong contribution to the excellent teaching and outcomes for pupils.
- Middle leaders are accountable for the progress pupils make in their subject areas. Senior leaders regularly review their work, observe learning, check the pupils' books and write plans for further improvement. In addition, the proprietors and headteacher commission high-quality support, using specialist advisers and consultants to check the quality of teaching and learning. This enables them to set challenging targets to ensure that the school continues to improve.
- The highly effective appraisal arrangements for teachers and learning assistants are closely linked to pupils' outcomes. For example, staff are trained on the setting of measurable targets for their pupils' achievement, and are robustly held to account for the pupils' progress towards their targets.
- All staff regularly meet and visit colleagues from the other schools within the family of Thomas's schools, and from schools outside the group. This enables them to share good ideas and ways of improving their teaching by ensuring that it is refreshed and up to date.
- The stimulating curriculum successfully balances academic subjects with physical, technological, creative and outdoor pursuits. For example, 12 languages are offered, including Arabic, Mandarin, Russian and Swahili, and just under 350 instrumental music lessons take place each week. Pupils' participation in outdoor learning strongly promotes their practical skills, happiness and well-being by connecting with the natural world. The remarkable breadth of the curriculum enables pupils to develop a range of skills to a high level in order to meet the requirements of the common entrance examinations.
- Staff ensure that British values are fundamental to everyday life in school. Every opportunity is taken to reinforce these values so that respect and tolerance are central to everybody's behaviour. Pupils receive helpful and effective careers guidance and advice that help them make well-informed decisions about future career options.
- The promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Trips to interesting places in London and residential visits to Essex, Austria and France develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem. These activities help pupils to appreciate how people from different cultures, faiths and backgrounds, as well as those with characteristics that are protected in law, contribute to British society.

- Almost all parents and carers spoken with and those who responded to the Ofsted questionnaire, Parent View, were highly positive about the school.

Governance

- The proprietors and a leadership board act as governors, working effectively with leaders to ensure that the school continues to improve rapidly. This strong partnership ensures that all statutory requirements are met.
- Membership is drawn from a wide field of professional expertise and experience, which includes education, business, finance, human resources, law and safeguarding. Governors provide excellent challenge to senior leaders and hold them to account.
- Governors have ensured that a suitable and effective safeguarding policy, along with a wealth of other policies, information and video clips, are available on the school's website.
- The proprietors have put in place very robust arrangements for the performance management of the headteacher, conducted by an external consultant. The process lasts one week and, in addition to the scrutiny of a wealth of performance information, takes into account the views of staff, parents and pupils. Detailed reports are presented to the proprietors, and challenging targets are set for the headteacher.
- Governors effectively oversee the school's system for the appraisal of staff performance. They, together with the headteacher, ensure that any decisions about salary progression are based on secure evidence that is firmly linked to pupils' progress.
- The proprietors and governors regularly commission independent reviews of all aspects of the school's work throughout the year to ensure that they have an accurate view of its performance.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The proprietors, together with the headteacher and senior staff, have ensured that the safety of pupils is given the highest priority.
- The school's appropriate safeguarding policy reflects the Secretary of State's most recent guidance, 'Keeping children safe in education' (September 2016). It contains helpful references to, and contact details for, a range of external agencies, including the local authority's safeguarding officers. The policy is published on the school's website.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding practice throughout the school because staff receive well-considered and regular safeguarding training. Staff are fully informed of all types of risk to pupils, including radicalisation and extremism. They are confident of the action to take should they have any concerns about the safety or care of pupils. Staff have a clear understanding of the need to protect pupils from all potential risks.
- Pupils reported that they feel very safe and secure while at school. Parents regularly attend well-considered workshops about safeguarding so that they learn how to keep their children safe when using the internet, for example.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress and achieve high standards because they are extremely well taught. One of the reasons for this is that relationships between staff and pupils are consistently positive and respectful.
- Teachers have very secure subject knowledge and use questioning to extend pupils' learning continually. Pupils learn to think for themselves because of the high-quality questioning. They become increasingly confident as they develop strong communication skills. For example, pupils in key stage 3 were able confidently to apply their grammatical understanding of sentence structure to improve their translation of Latin into English.
- Teachers use assessment information well to adapt classroom activities to meet pupils' needs. Staff provide challenging tasks so that pupils are interested and engaged, and work with enthusiasm.
- In mathematics, teachers aim to develop pupils' confidence and resilience to help them overcome new or difficult challenges. Pupils use portable modern technologies well to record their solutions to investigations. Real excitement and energy are often evident when pupils successfully achieve their goals.
- Pupils' work in science is impressive. During the inspection, key stage 2 pupils were evaluating an experiment they had conducted on the absorption of different products. They were able to apply their previous learning to the design of their research project, commenting on the outcomes and the modifications they needed to make in order to complete the experiments. Science topic books, in all year groups, show pupils have an excellent understanding of scientific techniques and produce written work of high quality.
- Younger pupils used their phonics skills well to sound out unusual words when they were writing about fossils and dinosaurs in their enquiry books. Staff are very successful in helping the lowest prior attaining pupils and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities to make rapid progress in their reading skills.
- Pupils develop a wide range of writing skills across a variety of genres, across all subjects at a high level. However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to apply these skills to more independent and extended creative pieces of work. This limits their overall attainment in writing.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are confident and self-assured. They take great pride in their school and its history. They are keen to share their academic, sporting and artistic achievements, and the strategies they are using to study and learn successfully.
- The school places great emphasis on the importance of respect and good manners. Pupils make a strong contribution to school life and the local community. They gladly take on additional responsibilities, such as becoming house captains or sports captains, or serving

on the school council. They also take part in many fundraising events for local, national and international charities. These activities equip pupils well for their futures as global citizens.

- Pupils benefit from very high standards of pastoral care and support. The presence of a counsellor and school nurse makes a strong contribution to their welfare, enabling them to face life's challenges and live balanced lives. The benefits of leading a healthy lifestyle are promoted strongly in many subjects across the curriculum. A neuro-diversity week enables pupils to examine critically the factors that contribute to different states of mental and emotional well-being. The school's in-house chef prepares nutritious meals and knows each child's individual dietary requirements. These measures ensure that pupils' physical and emotional well-being is promoted extremely effectively.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying, including that which is racist or homophobic. They reported that bullying is extremely rare, and, if it does occur, it is dealt with swiftly and effectively. The school's records confirm that it is very rare. Pupils reported that they feel safe in school and know how to stay safe online and when using social media. They are sensible when outside the home or school environment, and are aware of the potential dangers outside of school, including being drawn into extremism.
- Parents who spoke to an inspector, or who responded to Ofsted's online survey, feel that their children are very safe in school. They also agreed that their children's welfare is a high priority for the staff.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable, both in classrooms and around the school.
- Pupils display exemplary attitudes to their learning. They are welcoming and eager to discuss their learning with visitors. They are keen to do well, settle to tasks quickly and share their ideas enthusiastically. As a result, there are no interruptions to learning, and this contributes to their strong progress.
- Great emphasis is placed on pupils and staff being kind to one another. This reflects the overarching value of the Thomas's family of schools. As a result, poor behaviour is extremely rare.
- Pupils love coming to their school and, as a result, they attend very regularly.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- In all year groups and across the range of subjects, pupils make excellent progress in their studies because they are extremely well taught.
- In 2017, pupils aged 11 and 13 were successful in entrance examinations and all gained places to continue their studies at well-known independent secondary schools. Just over three quarters of these pupils achieved prestigious awards or scholarships. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Most pupils achieve standards that are above expectations for their ages in spelling, punctuation and grammar. They are very fluent and confident readers. By the end of Year

8, when most pupils are 13, almost all read at least at the level expected nationally of 14-year-olds. Two out of three pupils have a reading age that is three years above their chronological age.

- The school's information shows, and inspection evidence confirms, that pupils' skills in mathematics are also strong. Interesting problem-solving activities systematically deepen pupils' understanding of mathematical concepts and engage their interest. This is because tasks are often related to real-life situations.
- Pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds make the same rapid progress as others. Those who have SEN and/or disabilities also make excellent progress. This is because they receive well-considered support from specialist staff who help them to develop strategies to become successful learners.
- Pupils follow an individualised approach to learning, carefully matched to their abilities, which allows them to make rapid progress. This particularly benefits the most able pupils, as there are no limits to what or how quickly they can learn.
- Pupils make excellent progress overall in academic, physical, technological, creative and linguistic subjects. They achieve particularly well in the arts and sport. From Year 2 onwards, pupils achieve great success in external examinations in ballet, public speaking and performing on a range of musical instruments. Pupils make strong progress in sports, often taking part in competitive fixtures at local and national levels. Large numbers of pupils develop confidence by participating in concerts and productions. These experiences enable them to develop high levels of self-confidence and self-control, particularly when performing in public.
- Pupils' work across a wide range of subjects is typically of a high standard. However, the writing skills of some pupils are limited because they do not have enough opportunities to write creatively at length.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- Children make excellent progress in the early years, as a result of very effective leadership and high-quality teaching.
- Most children join the school with skills and knowledge that are typical for their age. The proportion of children achieving a good level of development is well above the national average, with the majority of all children exceeding expectations for their age. As a result, they are very well prepared for entry into Year 1.
- The rich early years environment ensures that activities are motivating and enjoyable, across all the areas of learning. The outside area, with its mud kitchen and climbing apparatus, provides many stimulating opportunities for children's physical development. Classroom displays are rich in language. For example, there are well-written examples of letters written to a well-known television presenter asking searching questions. These include: 'How do penguins swim?' 'Why do sharks have fins?' and 'How do elephants get water from their trunks?' These activities enable children to make great strides in their learning and achieve extremely well.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years is a strength. Highly effective support from teachers and teaching assistants enables children to make rapid progress. They use this knowledge very well to help them to read and spell unfamiliar words. As a result, by the

end of Year 1 they achieve high standards in the phonics screening checks. As they move through the school, pupils acquire a love of reading and achieve high standards.

- Induction arrangements for children are rigorous and enable staff to gain an in-depth knowledge of children's skills and aptitudes. Parents are actively involved in this process. A representative from the local authority checks the information to ensure that it is accurate.
- Teachers use the information from leaders to establish routines and to design imaginative activities at the correct level to stimulate children's learning. For example, in their project about different habitats, children studied the savannah and arctic environments. They learned which animals were able to survive in these habitats, what they ate and the different types of weather in the contrasting landscapes. Children thoroughly enjoyed working together. They showed high levels of concentration and positive behaviour in their learning, and made excellent progress.
- The leadership of the early years is outstanding. Leaders have an excellent understanding of children's learning. They make highly effective use of the online tracking system, sharing information with parents, to ensure that children make the best possible progress. Staff provide well-planned workshops for parents to help their children with their reading.
- The school meets the statutory early years requirements and the independent school standards in relation to the early years provision. Safeguarding is effective.

School details

Unique reference number	130398
DfE registration number	212/6398
Inspection number	10026281

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other Independent School
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	647
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Tobyn and Ben Thomas
Chair	Ben Thomas
Headteacher	Philip Ward
Annual fees (day pupils)	£12,675–£19,071
Telephone number	020 7326 9300
Website	www.thomas-s.co.uk/Clapham
Email address	clapham@thomas-s.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	23–24 March 2011

Information about this school

- Thomas's Clapham is an independent, co-educational, preparatory day school. The Thomas family founded the school in 1981.
- The school is one of four independent schools, a kindergarten and a primary academy that are owned and managed by Thomas's London Day Schools.
- The school aims to ensure that 'each child receives an education that is inclusive, innovative and inspiring, that enables them to reach their full potential'. To 'be kind' is an overarching value across all of the Thomas's schools.

- This is a Christian school but is open to all faiths.
- The current proprietors are the sons of the school founders and they provide the strategic direction for the school.
- The school is registered for up to 650 pupils aged four to 13, and currently there are 647 pupils on the roll. This total is made up as follows: 238 children in the Reception to Year 2, 152 pupils in Years 3 to 4, and 257 pupils in Years 5 to 8.
- All children attend the Reception classes on a full-time basis. None of them is in receipt of government funding.
- There are very few pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHC). There are no pupils eligible for free school meals.
- One in five of all pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the remainder being White British. There are pupils of 25 nationalities and 19 languages are spoken. The pupils speak a variety of home languages, many being bilingual, and some trilingual.
- The school was last inspected in March 2011, when it was judged to be outstanding.
- Off-site training is made available for pupils to extend their learning experiences. The school offers the following activities:
 - swimming at four venues: Latchmere Leisure Centre, Burns Road, London SW11 5AD; Emanuel School, Battersea Rise, London SW11 1HS; Tooting Leisure Centre, Greaves Place, London SW17 0AT; and Ernest Bevan College, Beechcroft Road, London SE24 9HE
 - watersports at Wimbledon Park Sports Centre, Home Park Road, London SW19 7HX
 - wall climbing at 1 Crowthorne Road, Westway, London W10 6RP
 - horse riding at Dulwich Riding Stables, Dulwich Common, Dulwich, London SE21 7EX.
- When they leave, almost all pupils transfer to well-known independent schools.

Information about this inspection

- This full standard inspection took place with one day's notice.
- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across all year groups and subjects, in almost all cases jointly with senior staff. They spoke to pupils informally throughout the inspection.
- There were 66 responses to Parent View and 47 text comments from parents. Inspectors considered the school's analysis of its own survey of the views of pupils and parents. Inspectors also took into account the 58 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors held discussions with two governors, senior and middle leaders, staff and parents. A telephone discussion was also held with an external consultant and a parent.
- Inspectors reviewed key documents and policies, including those related to safeguarding, to check the school's compliance with the independent school standards. They scrutinised pupils' books and the school's information about pupils' attainment and progress.

Inspection team

David Scott, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sean Flood	Ofsted Inspector
Paula Farrow	Ofsted Inspector

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