

Thomas's Battersea

28–40 Battersea High Street, London, SW11 3JB

Inspection dates

6–8 February 2018

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| 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

- Leadership is truly inspirational. Leaders' and governors' visionary outlook creates a highly effective education for all its pupils.
- Modesty, attention to detail and continuing improvement typifies leadership and governance. No stone is left unturned and no weakness ignored in leaders' pursuit of excellence.
- The curriculum is unequivocally broad. It meets pupils' interests and needs exceptionally well. Pupils find the wide range of stimulating experiences in school and the many clubs, visits and activities, exciting and interesting. This includes the developing use of digital tablets.
- High-quality teaching is the norm. Teachers make learning enjoyable and, at the same time, challenging. Pupils are highly enthusiastic learners and take every opportunity to deepen their knowledge and understanding.
- The early years is expertly led and managed. Children are excited by the wide range of learning activities and develop their skills effectively.
- The quality of pupils' welfare and care is intertwined seamlessly with the highest academic expectations. As a result, pupils make excellent progress with their learning.
- Pupils' personal and intellectual development go hand in hand. Both are promoted extremely well to ensure that pupils leave Thomas's Battersea able to make the most of the opportunities available in later life.
- Pupils' behaviour is impeccable. They are kind and respectful to others, welcoming visitors warmly.
- The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are highly effective. This ensures that pupils are helped to keep themselves safe.
- Academic outcomes are very strong. All pupils, including the most able and those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, achieve standards that are significantly above average.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the requirements of the independent school standards are met in full.

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?

- Build on the work already carried out to develop digital technology so that it is incorporated fully into pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Highly effective leadership has ensured that pupils receive a first-class education. All staff and governors share a clear vision and deep-rooted values. Together, they place pupils' well-being and achievement right at the centre of everything the school does. All staff share this passion for excellence. They work very effectively to ensure that pupils' personal and academic achievements are second to none.
- Leaders at all levels work successfully to provide an extremely strong culture for learning that enables all pupils to reach high standards. This culture pervades the school's work, whether welcoming parents and carers and pupils in the morning or making sure that learning is fun, enjoyable and successful. It ensures that there is a highly supportive atmosphere in which all pupils are able to develop into thoughtful and respectful young people who value learning.
- This supportive atmosphere has an unquestionable impact on staff morale. Staff responses to a questionnaire about their views were unanimously positive. Comments about the school as a family and the support for staff training and development were common threads.
- The systems used to identify priorities for improvement are detailed and thorough. As a result, leaders are able to assess the school's strengths and weaknesses rigorously. Despite their success, leaders remain modest about their achievements. They are quick to tackle any weaknesses and keen to develop new and better ways of doing things. As a result, leaders at all levels, from the principals through senior leaders to classroom teachers, make a significant difference to pupils' education.
- Leaders use a range of strategies to check pupils' progress to see if teaching is having a positive impact on learning. The school's assessment information is detailed and easily accessible. Leaders use this information sensitively to pinpoint pupils' progress and give targeted support where it is needed most. Consequently, pupils make sustained progress throughout their time at the school.
- There are very effective strategies to improve pupils' achievements. For example, the school's approach to encouraging pupils to read regularly and often has been highly successful. The libraries are used well at breaktimes, lunchtimes and after school. Pupils tackle increasingly advanced books and enjoy reading a great deal. Other initiatives, such as using feedback to help pupils improve their work further, make a noticeable and sustained difference to outcomes.
- The rich and varied curriculum is one of the defining qualities of Thomas's Battersea. The core and wide range of co-curricular subjects, such as drama and art, ensure high-quality experiences for all pupils. These experiences are enhanced still further by the way subjects are connected by interesting and imaginative themes. This is highly successful and, for example, ensures that literacy and numeracy are built into the teaching of other subjects.
- Leaders are currently developing the digital curriculum as a way to provide learning that is even better matched to individual needs. They envisage, for example, using tablet devices more widely so that pupils learn to develop their research to an even greater

extent. This work has already begun and leaders have clear plans to develop it further.

- The range of extra-curricular activities and visits extend the curriculum exceptionally well. These include the nine different drama productions each year, and clubs for drama, ballet, pottery, debating, philosophy and a number of sports. These, and many more, ensure that pupils develop skills that complement their learning in the formal curriculum. As a result, pupils are exceptionally well prepared when they leave Thomas's Battersea for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. This is because the school's curriculum, including the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme and religious studies promote pupils' personal skills effectively. For example, following a visit to an art installation about refugees, pupils' discussions were very moving. They showed high levels of empathy, insight and respect for others, and demonstrated the very best of the fundamental British values.
- The school's provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is especially strong. There is a wide range of interventions including occupational therapy, psychotherapy, support for reading and individual tuition. These have a strong impact on learning, enabling pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities to make excellent progress.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similarly strong progress. By the time they leave the school, they are fluent in written and spoken English. This is because teachers are highly adept at identifying pupils' particular needs and giving them the right support. In addition, the teaching of language and literacy is most effective, ensuring that all pupils learn to use English with confidence.

Governance

- The arrangements for governance are robust. The two principals and the deputy principal provide the function of governors. They know the school in detail and its priorities for improvement. This is because they are given comprehensive information about the school's performance by senior leaders. In addition, the principals and deputy principal are frequent visitors to the school and are involved fully in its long-term development as well as supporting improvements to the curriculum and teaching.
- Those responsible for governance ensure that there is the right balance between challenge and support. This enables the school to fulfil its statutory responsibilities effectively and meet the requirements of the independent school standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' safety and welfare are promoted extremely well. Leaders take every opportunity to develop the procedures for safeguarding pupils so that they are thorough, realistic and integrated seamlessly into the life of the school. As a result, pupils' safety and well-being are of the highest quality.
- There is a comprehensive training programme for all staff that enables them to keep up to date with safeguarding practice. As a result, teachers have a secure understanding of how to ensure that pupils are kept safe, including issues related to child exploitation and female genital mutilation. Staff know how to deal with any concerns pupils might raise and to whom these should be reported. Leaders recognise that they could do more to

cover radicalisation and extremism and have convincing plans for more training.

- Leaders have ensured that where appropriate there are strong links with outside organisations such as social services and the local authority's safeguarding officers. In addition, the school employs professionals who are able to provide specialist support quickly and effectively. The school maintains particularly close links with parents to ensure that all pupils are kept safe.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the suitable safeguarding policy is available to parents on the school's website.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Outstanding

- Pupils' learning is outstanding. Senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants are all passionate about their work and determined that all pupils leave Thomas's Battersea absolutely and fully prepared for the future.
- All staff, including teaching assistants and volunteers, have high expectations. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to plan interesting and challenging work. Teachers make learning relevant by choosing topics that motivate pupils and by making links between different subjects. Pupils' excitement is unmistakable. For example, pupils in Year 1 were very excited about their work on the theme of space, and listened and watched with wonderment in the 'planetarium'.
- Teachers work well in partnership with other teachers, and support staff most effectively to plan learning and share ideas. This creates a very positive climate for learning right across the school. Teachers are thoughtful and reflective, constantly developing and improving their practice. This ensures that pupils get high-quality teaching that is matched closely to their needs and abilities.
- Teachers use questions particularly well to promote learning. Searching questions are used most effectively to challenge pupils' thinking and deepen their understanding. Teachers also use questions to challenge stereotyping well, reinforcing the school's values and the school's strong moral code.
- Teachers use digital technology to inspire and motivate pupils to learn. For example, in science, pupils were able to access short videos, via large wall displays, about making a rocket. The link between science, computer science, and design and technology was seamless, making learning exciting and fun.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Pupils respect their teachers hugely and this enables learning to proceed without the slightest hint of disruption. Similarly, teachers have a great deal of respect for pupils and clearly enjoy being with them. As a result, pupils' attitudes to school and to their work are enormously positive. The enjoyment they get from learning is unmistakable. All these elements have a significant impact on pupils' learning, enabling them to achieve high standards.
- The school has developed comprehensive assessment arrangements that enable teachers to evaluate pupils' progress accurately. As a result, teachers have a clear understanding of pupils' achievements and whether they need additional support. Staff use this information effectively to set suitable work that challenges pupils' thinking.
- Literacy and numeracy are taught effectively. The wide range of books in the libraries and

classrooms interest and challenge pupils well. In mathematics, word problems reinforce these literacy skills further. The focus on strengthening pupils' mathematical understanding in Years 1 and 2 provides a secure foundation for work in key stages 2 and 3.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This is because of the seamless way all staff ensure that pupils' academic and personal development are given equal importance. Many parents who commented praised the high quality of pastoral care. Typical comments include: 'Academics, music and drama are all at a very high standard and the school is incredibly diligent when it comes to pastoral care.'
- The opportunities for pupils' personal development are excellent. The wide range of after-school clubs, visits to places of interest and visiting speakers all enable pupils to develop their understanding of themselves and their place in the wider world.
- Staff pay a great deal of attention to pupils' well-being and happiness. The school's systems to promote pupils' welfare are innovative and effective. Staff take great care to understand pupils' emotional well-being, including their mental health, and to give support where necessary. The school's use of a commercial system to help identify those who might otherwise be overlooked complements teachers' knowledge of pupils especially well. As a result, no pupils fall through the net and the therapies available to the school are targeted effectively to those who need support.
- Pupils are poised, confident and articulate but unpretentious. For example, Year 8 pupils reported that, because they were 'privileged', they had a duty to help make a difference to the global refugee crisis. Pupils have huge respect for teachers and speak highly about all that their teachers do for them. When thanked for their help, they replied, 'No, thank the teachers.'
- The opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are impressive. Pupils act as representatives for a wide range of issues, including sustainability, food, anti-bullying, the school council and helping younger children with their reading. These opportunities contribute effectively to pupils' personal development and ensure that they are ready to take their place in the world.
- The care and welfare of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is of high quality. Dedicated staff work skilfully with pupils to help them overcome any barriers to learning. As a result, all pupils, regardless of their needs, make substantial progress with their learning.
- The school is vigilant about pupils' safety. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including online and from peer pressure. Pupils feel very safe in school. The PSHE programme, religious studies and assemblies ensure that bullying, racism and British values are dealt with well.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. They are highly attentive in class and respond extremely well to teachers' instructions and requests. Consequently, disruption to learning

in classrooms is extremely rare. This contributes to both the positive atmosphere in the school and pupils' achievements.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils' conduct in classrooms and around the school is impeccable. They are polite, welcoming and respectful. Inspectors were struck with the way pupils behaved thoughtfully and responsibly in whatever they undertook. There were no raised voices from teachers, and pupils worked together exceedingly well, discussing topics and helping each other to good effect.
- Attendance is high. Figures compare very favourably with maintained schools. Pupils enjoy coming to school. Many parents commented on how much their children enjoy school. As one noted: 'On the night before the new term started, my daughter said, "I'm so excited to go to school tomorrow." I think that says it all.' The school has enhanced its procedures for checking attendance and is vigilant in following up absences.
- Pupils reported that there is very little, if any, bullying. They were clear that, if in the unlikely event it were to happen, their teachers would deal with it quickly and effectively. The school's records corroborate that incidents of bullying are extremely rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Outstanding

- Pupils make excellent progress to reach the highest standards. From above-average starting points, they deepen their knowledge, understanding and skills successfully to reach standards that are typically well above average. Nowhere is this clearer than in pupils' achievements in music and drama, where pupils excel in the many productions and recitals each year. However, academic achievement is equally impressive. The school's assessment information and visits to classrooms confirm that pupils make significant progress in all subjects including English, mathematics and science. This is the result of teachers' excellent subject knowledge and superb teaching skills.
- All pupils, including the most and least able, and those who are less academically inclined, make outstanding progress. This is because the school knows in detail how each pupil is doing with their work and uses this information to provide relevant support. These interventions are effective, enabling all pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, to achieve well.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similarly impressive progress. Again, this is the result of teachers' high-quality interventions and the effectiveness of literacy teaching, including the use of phonics.
- Pupils are prepared particularly well for the next stage of their education. When pupils leave Thomas's Battersea, typically at the end of Year 6 or Year 8, nearly all move to the school of their choice. As one parent noted, pupils are 'well equipped for life and (the school) prepares them to contribute to society in a positive way'.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- High-quality leadership promotes children's progress and learning exceptionally well. Senior and middle leaders have a secure understanding of how children learn, and use their expertise to provide excellent provision. The stimulating atmosphere in classrooms and in the outside space ensures that children are excited by their learning. Adults provide a wide range of learning activities, including those that are led by the teacher and those where pupils are encouraged to be independent. These activities mean that children develop their skills in all areas of learning effectively.
- The strong climate for learning in the Reception Year promotes children's achievements most effectively. Reading and phonics are taught well and work on numbers ensures that children start Year 1 with the skills they need for the more formal curriculum. Similarly, the French 'workshops' are extremely effective. This is because the work is challenging but also age-appropriate and meets children's needs well.
- Children's emotional well-being and self-confidence are given a high priority. As a result, children develop into self-assured learners. They are not afraid to make errors or answer questions and are encouraged to learn from their mistakes.
- Children's behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. They enjoy their learning and time in school hugely, and are highly motivated. Teachers and support staff work in partnership to make sure that all children make progress with their learning. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, make the same strong progress as others.
- The arrangements for tracking and recording children's achievements are comprehensive. As a result, staff know their children well. They use the information well to provide relevant activities and ask pertinent questions to stretch children's thinking. The increasing use of digital technology to record observations and assessments is proving positive, and provides staff with clear evidence of children's progress.
- Links with parents are very strong. For example, parents are invited to sessions to learn how the school teaches their children so that they can support their learning at home. These links contribute positively to children's progress and learning.
- Leaders ensure that the statutory requirements for the early years foundation stage are met in full.

School details

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| Unique reference number | 100530 |
| DfE registration number | 212/6401 |
| Inspection number | 10035775 |

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.

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| 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 | 568 |
| Number of part-time pupils | 0 |
| Proprietor | Tobyn and Ben Thomas |
| Chair | Ben Thomas |
| Headteacher | Simon O'Malley |
| Annual fees (day pupils) | £17,604–£19,884 |
| Telephone number | 020 7978 0900 |
| Website | www.thomas-s.co.uk |
| Email address | battersea@thomas-s.co.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 20–22 May 2014 |

Information about this school

- Thomas's Battersea is an independent school for boys and girls aged four to 13. The school is registered for up to 594 pupils. There are currently 568 on roll.
- The current headteacher was appointed in September 2017.
- The two principals and the deputy principal provide the function of governors.
- The school was last inspected in May 2014, when it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school does not use any off-site training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in classrooms across all year groups and subjects, including in the early years. Inspectors accompanied pupils to a music recital in the local church. Many of these observations were carried out jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors looked at arrangements at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, including the proprietors/governors, middle leaders, staff and pupils.
- A range of documentation and policies were scrutinised including the school's self-evaluation, records of pupils' behaviour and attendance, assessment information and school newsletters.
- Inspectors scrutinised records relating to the quality of teaching and the school's website, including information about extra-curricular activities, trips and visits.
- Inspectors reviewed records, policies and procedures relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took account of 108 parents' responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and over 60 written comments. Inspectors also looked at over 100 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

| | |
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| Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector | Her Majesty's Inspector |
| Natalia Power | Ofsted Inspector |
| David Davies | Ofsted Inspector |

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