

Thamesview School

Thong Lane, Gravesend, Kent DA12 4LF

Inspection dates

19–20 June 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since his appointment, the headteacher has astutely evaluated the quality of leadership and taken effective steps to adjust and strengthen senior and middle leaders' roles.
- Teaching is predominantly good, as is the improving progress that current pupils are making from their starting points. Pupils whose reading is weak on entry make rapid progress, and most of them catch up with others quickly.
- The new, very small, sixth form has got off to a flying start with keen leadership. Students are taught well, learn enthusiastically and make good progress.
- The quality of practical and emotional support and care is excellent. This is especially true for physically disabled pupils.
- Most pupils behave very well, work hard in lessons and are keen to learn. However, a few pupils' behaviour is not as good as others.
- Members of the school community get on well together. Staff, pupils and students are respectful of diversity, treating everyone equally whatever their different backgrounds.
- Some middle leaders are very effective at delivering good progress in their subjects. They instil enthusiasm within their departments, consistency in teaching and build up pupils' confidence.
- The curriculum is broad and interesting. Pupils appreciate the wide range of additional activities on offer.
- The very supportive governing body has recently appointed members to complement its existing skills and expertise.
- Information about the progress and attendance of pupils is not always fully up to date or succinct. At times, this hampers leaders' abilities to identify and deal with issues really promptly.
- Leaders do not always swiftly identify support needed for some pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.
- Attendance is below the national average. While improving, some groups of pupils do not attend regularly enough.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Identify and implement additional support for all pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities in a timely way.
- Ensure that leaders consistently have access to incisive and up-to-date information about pupils' progress and attendance so that all issues can be dealt with fully and effectively.
- Further improve pupils' attendance, particularly that of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has, prior to and since his recent arrival, swiftly identified the relative strengths and weaknesses in leadership. He has not hesitated in making sensible and appropriate changes to further strengthen leadership across the school. Some middle leaders are particularly effective in the way they work with staff, ensure consistently good teaching and improve pupils' rates of progress.
- The quality of teaching and learning is assessed accurately and teachers appreciate the relevant, well-planned professional development they receive. Useful links with other schools enable sharing of best practice and joint assessment of pupils' work and progress. All the staff who completed their questionnaire said that they enjoy working at the school.
- In addition to English, mathematics and science, pupils experience a wide range of creative subjects, many on offer at GCSE. Dance is popular and pupils can work towards high-level qualifications recognised by universities. The extensive extra-curricular programme gives all pupils the opportunity to enjoy themselves in areas such as sport, music, watching films, playing games or play-writing.
- Pupils' appreciation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues is fostered very well within the carefully structured personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. This is delivered through form times and assemblies, as well as 'focus days'. Pupils know the importance of democracy and are not embarrassed when discussing sensitive topics such as extremism or LGBT relationships. They are well prepared for their future plans, which now include the option of attending the school's new sixth form.
- Pastoral care for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is sensitive and effective. However, additional help to support the academic progress of some of these pupils is not identified quickly enough. For example, pupils with behavioural problems, who require support and a possible risk assessment, are not always identified accurately.
- Governors and senior leaders do everything possible to fill teaching posts with subject specialists. As a result of imaginative input from the head of department, the school has successfully recruited a mathematics specialist. In the next academic year, the science department will also be fully staffed by specialists, which has not been the case in recent years.
- Leaders' information about pupils' progress and attendance sometimes lacks sharpness and timeliness. When this happens, leaders are not able to address any issues quickly enough.

Governance of the school

- One of the governing body's strengths is the wealth of relevant expertise its members bring to their discussions. Their backgrounds include working in education, the police force, finance, welfare and health. Plans are in place to offer governors more opportunities to hear from and probe senior leaders at some of their meetings.

- The governors are fully alert to the need to develop ways to further encourage regular attendance among pupils. They know which pupils do not do as well as others and that they need to see precise information about disadvantaged pupils' progress, for example. Governors know the school well and can identify the school's strengths.
- Governors check that all additional funding for disadvantaged pupils, those eligible for literacy and numeracy support or who have SEN and/or disabilities is allocated correctly. They do not always have the information they need to assess how effectively these funds have been spent to improve pupils' academic progress, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
- An experienced governor oversees safeguarding and monitors related issues regularly and carefully. Governors describe how much behaviour has improved in recent years but realise there are individual pupils who still need more intensive support to succeed at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Checks on staff are detailed and meticulous. Staff training, particularly on their duty to report any concerns they have about a pupil's welfare, is up to date and regular.
- The local area population is mobile. In every year group, a high number of pupils enter and leave the school for a wide range of reasons. Several local schools have reciprocal arrangements with the school to give pupils a fresh start if needed. While inspectors were able to confirm that staff report all pupils who leave the school to the local authority, the school's record-keeping of this important information needs to be tighter.
- A professional e-safety consultant speaks to pupils every year about the potential dangers of texting and using the internet. As a result of this and other work in school, pupils know how to keep themselves safe online. Staff and parent responses to the Ofsted questionnaires confirmed what the majority of pupils agreed – that they feel safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Many teachers have expert knowledge of their subjects, eagerly conveying their enthusiasm to pupils. This contributes to pupils' enjoyment in lessons and the good progress they make. On the rare occasions learning is not so successful, this is largely explained by non-specialists or supply teachers filling recruitment gaps, especially in science and French.
- In some years, close to half of the pupils enter the school with reading ages below their actual age. Skilful teaching and learning support assistants use a high-quality range of resources so that most pupils' reading improves rapidly with intensive support and practice. A few pupils carry on longer term with reading support until they are able to read well.
- Supporting the whole-school focus on reading and writing, teachers regularly check that pupils use subject-specific words, and know exactly what they mean. For example, Year 10 pupils know the precise language required in psychology, or can clearly

articulate their choice of a particular painter for their research work in art. Every week, form time includes work on literacy and numeracy.

- Leaders have successfully improved teachers' questioning so that pupils think hard. In English, teachers insist that pupils justify their interpretation of evidence they select. In physical education, teachers make sure that pupils can recall, describe and explain the skills needed in different sports. Pupils working in construction are required to discuss and justify their particular designs.
- To reflect the high standards expected in revised GCSE examinations, several middle leaders have rewritten their teaching plans for Years 7 to 9. This has contributed to increased challenge, especially for the most able pupils who are aiming for the new, high grades.
- In mathematics, whatever ability set they are in, pupils have to keep their notebooks very neat and clear. This means that they can refer back to them for steps made in complex calculations or how they solved problems.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. It is successfully underpinned, as explained by a parent, 'by giving pupils the confidence to learn and overcome low self-esteem.' Staff in the 'nurture and support area' arrange support for individuals or groups of pupils and their different needs.
- A wide spectrum of internal and external mentors, community and specialist workers provide counselling for vulnerable pupils about issues such as mental health or pupils' individual worries and problems. Pastoral staff keep a supportive and attentive eye on the increasing number of children looked after by the local authority. They make sure that they are familiar with these pupils' backgrounds and home situations.
- The small number of disabled pupils who attend the specialist unit receive daily physiotherapy designed individually for them. Key workers skilfully attend to their physical needs and check that subject resources are adapted well for this group of pupils' highly specific requirements. Regular contact with wheelchair providers and outside agencies contributes to the excellent support in place.
- The programme for pupils' PSHE education is planned carefully and delivered effectively. Health and safety has a high profile in sports, food studies and construction lessons, for example. Pupils learn about interesting topics, which are relevant to their future lives, including responsibilities in society, immunisations and infections in Year 9, along with potential risks in society in Year 10.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The large majority of them buckle down in lessons and work cooperatively together. Some choose to sit on their own, as they find this helps them to concentrate. They appreciate their attractive surroundings and keep the school litter-free.

- The number of persistent absentees has reduced in recent years. While there have been considerable improvements in overall attendance, it is currently below average. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils have the lowest attendance, although this does include some pupils who miss school for medical treatment. Pupils' punctuality has improved this year.
- Leaders have recently set up a 100% attendance club and increased home-school support to intensify efforts to reduce absence. An education welfare officer supports staff's work to gain parents' and carers' support for good attendance.
- Whenever possible, the school uses on-site rooms for misdemeanours to avoid pupils missing school. It has reciprocal arrangements with several local schools for 'managed moves', for pupils who need a trial period which may lead to a permanent fresh start elsewhere. There have been no permanent exclusions this academic year and fixed-term exclusions have remained below average in the last two years.
- Pupils acknowledge that bullying does happen sometimes but the majority of pupils feel that teachers are good at resolving it. The extremely rare incidents of racism are dealt with rapidly and firmly.
- Only a small number of pupils interrupt lessons. Several of these pupils have social and learning needs that have not been assessed accurately or quickly enough, so the extra support they need is not in place. The headteacher has already identified these concerns and is taking swift action to address them.
- For the very few pupils who attend alternative provision, the school receives weekly information about their attendance and behaviour and termly summaries about their support and progress. Staff visit these pupils so they know that their welfare is secure and to check on their progress. These pupils' basic skills are improving and they make good progress towards their individual goals in other subjects.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most current pupils, including an increasing proportion of those who are disadvantaged, make good progress. The majority of pupils enter the school with below-average standards in English and mathematics. The proportions of low- and middle-attaining pupils, whose attendance was good, matched the 2017 national figures for a strong pass (grade 5 and above) in both these subjects.
- A minority of younger pupils do not achieve as well as they should in English. Work seen shows that current Year 10 pupils are doing much better at tackling the style and content of the GCSE examinations. The subject leader has rightly ensured that all members of the department have reflected carefully on the standards expected in this GCSE. Year 7 pupils identify specific techniques used in poetry and discuss creative writing confidently. English teachers motivate boys by carefully selecting texts for them that they can relate to and enjoy.
- GCSE results in many subjects improved in 2017. This is as a result of new subject leaders' impact. Examples include art, business studies, sports, geography, history, computer science and music. Pupils' work seen during the inspection confirmed that pupils continue to make at least good progress in these subjects.
- The school employs a specialist to support the rising number of pupils, especially in the

lower years, who speak English as an additional language. Intensive one-to-one and group sessions improve these pupils' language skills effectively.

- The gaps between Year 11 disadvantaged pupils' progress and other pupils nationally have narrowed in recent years, especially in mathematics. Subject leaders have implemented action plans for these pupils which have meant all teachers focus more closely on the learning of this group of pupils.
- In 2017, GCSE results revealed a strong correlation between pupils with relatively low attendance and any underachievement, especially by disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities. Building on some successful work, leaders are addressing this.
- In 2017, at least 75% of pupils attained as well as pupils with similar starting points nationally. Middle-attaining pupils, just over half of the year group, made the same progress as pupils with similar starting points nationally. Leaders acknowledge that the relatively small number of most-able pupils have yet to achieve their full potential. Staff are alert to these pupils in their classes and those met during the inspection said that they felt challenged in most subjects.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The small number of students who have started the International Baccalaureate Careers Programme (IBCP) are making strong progress because they all enjoy their chosen subjects. They experience high-quality, specialist teaching, often in small groups.
- Following a strong start, leadership of this part of the school is gathering momentum. The number of applicants for September 2018 is encouragingly similar to that experienced by other schools when they introduced the IBCP.
- The strong quality of teaching matches students' high levels of enthusiasm and hard work. For example, students work independently and confidently in mathematics, reflect knowledgeably on video extracts in sports theory lessons, discuss their work experience thoughtfully in business studies and willingly spend many hours a week on perfecting dance routines in performing arts.
- Leaders have arranged useful training for teachers on the philosophy and style of learning for the programme. Further training will be put in place as more subjects are introduced. A built-in feature of the programme is the close link between work-related courses and academic ones, encouraging students to look ahead to further education and employment prospects.
- The programme includes a reflective research project on a moral or ethical issue, stemming from students' studies, community service and language development. During the inspection, students were seen commenting thoughtfully after watching a modern foreign language film in Italian, to explore the country's different culture.
- Students' community work has included preparing a quiz and supporting a school show to raise funds for an autism charity. Some students help younger pupils to improve their reading and/or act as mentors for them to feel secure in school.
- Teachers make sure that students continue to extend and improve their English and

mathematical skills successfully.

- Students are mature in how they work and behave. They are keen to go to university and, with good careers advice, have begun to think carefully about their futures. They are good role models for younger pupils.

School details

Unique reference number	118879
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10046082

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	744
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	12
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Leslie Berry
Headteacher	George Rorke
Telephone number	01474 566552
Website	http://www.thamesviewsch.co.uk/
Email address	school@thamesview.kent.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	12–14 November 2014

Information about this school

- The headteacher, who was in post at the time of the previous inspection, left in December 2017. The deputy headteacher was appointed as interim headteacher until the present headteacher recently took up his post.
- The school has a specialist resource unit for a small number of pupils who have physical disabilities. They attend mainstream lessons.
- A new sixth form opened in September 2017 with a small number of students.
- The school is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above average.
- The large majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is low but increasing.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative, off-site provision at the Rosemary Centre, a pupil referral unit.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors looked at pupils’ books and observed teaching and learning in over 40 lessons, many of them accompanied by senior leaders.
- Inspectors met pupils and students informally and held meetings with randomly selected groups of pupils from several year groups, including a few Year 11 pupils who offered to come in during the inspection. Inspectors also met some of the most able pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities.
- The lead inspector met the chair and two other governors. She held telephone conversations with the school’s school improvement adviser and the Kent area head of fair access.
- Inspectors took into account responses to Ofsted’s questionnaires from 74 staff, 105 pupils and just over 40 parents, several of whom wrote additional comments.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector
Gerard Strong	Ofsted Inspector
Philip Storey	Ofsted Inspector

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