

Thomas Tallis School

Kidbrooke Park Road, Kidbrooke, London, SE3 9PX

Inspection dates

11–12 December 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	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders are capable and experienced. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas that need further development.
- Teaching is good overall. Teachers have competent subject knowledge and plan interesting activities that engage pupils in their learning. Recent improvements in the teaching of mathematics are already having a positive impact on the progress pupils make.
- There are some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Sometimes, teaching does not challenge high-attaining pupils sufficiently.
- The school's pastoral care for pupils is highly effective. Pupils feel happy, safe and very well cared for. Their well-being is at the heart of the school's work. Attendance is above average.
- The excellent sixth form is very well led and prepares students appropriately for their futures.
- The school offers a creative curriculum. Pupils study a wide range of subjects, particularly in Years 7 and 8. However, the curriculum is more narrow in Year 9.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are ready to learn, and are polite, caring of others and friendly.
- Since the last inspection, governors have been proactive in challenging the work of senior leaders. The governing body is committed to the school and keen to work with school leaders to make further improvements.
- Parents and carers receive useful information about the school from leaders. Leaders consult parents on the school's priorities. Parents are very pleased with the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the Year 9 curriculum is sufficiently broad and that all pupils are able to study their chosen subjects.
- Ensure that all pupils, especially the most able, make the progress of which they are capable.
- Ensure that governors continue to challenge leaders and check the impact of improvement actions.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and her senior team lead the school thoughtfully and ambitiously. They have clear, well-considered expectations of what pupils and staff should achieve. Staff are confident in the school's leaders. The school's aim of providing an 'education to understand the world and change it for the better' is evident in all of its work.
- Leaders and staff work hard to engage with all families. They are approachable and responsive. Parents feel their ideas are taken seriously and that they are treated by staff and leaders honestly and kindly. One parent said, 'I think there is something quite special about Thomas Tallis school: it has such an open-minded and creative culture.'
- Leaders evaluate the school carefully and accurately. They know the key strengths and areas for development. Their effective actions and good use of the school's resources sustain good practice and bring further improvement. This work has sharpened in the past year.
- Leaders have successfully tackled issues raised in the short inspection of January 2018. Most importantly, much-needed changes have been made to the provision for mathematics. These are beginning to have a positive impact on the progress pupils make.
- The pupil premium funding is spent thoughtfully to address sensible priorities. Leaders have focused on improving the attendance and behaviour of some disadvantaged pupils, with positive results.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used well to help identified pupils to make up any lost ground in their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The two specially resourced provision units for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as well as the wider provision for pupils with SEND, are well managed.
- Leaders have ensured that there is a wide and stimulating curriculum, particularly in Years 7 and 8. Arts provision across the school is very strong. Pupils benefit from a wide range of subject options at GCSE and post-16, which meet their needs and aspirations. Provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- However, the curriculum in Year 9 has some limitations and the range of subjects taken by some pupils is more narrow. For instance, some pupils study no languages or arts subjects. Some pupils feel that having chosen options in the middle of Year 8, these are difficult to change. Not all pupils follow courses in their chosen subjects. Leaders are reviewing the structure of the curriculum in Year 9.
- The school offers a good range of activities outside school hours, which pupils find motivating. Parents appreciate this.
- Teaching is well led. Leaders pay suitable attention to staff training. Middle leaders know where teaching needs developing and put in place appropriate support.
- Leaders structure the mentoring and professional development for newly qualified

teachers carefully. This helps these staff to make a successful start to their careers.

- The school uses the support provided by the local authority effectively.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is active and well organised. Its members are well trained in their roles and have achieved nationally recognised accreditation for the quality of governance. They ensure that safeguarding and other requirements are properly met. They know the school well. They visit regularly, hold discussions with staff and parents and scrutinise the reports they receive from leaders. They are supportive of senior leaders and usually challenge them well. However, there have been occasions when they have not focused sharply enough on the most pressing priorities; for instance, challenging school leaders about the progress made by some groups of pupils and outcomes in mathematics.
- Governors support senior leaders well in setting the school's direction. They provide a useful 'sounding board' for leaders. They share leaders' determination that the school should be successful, relevant to the needs of its community and enhance life chances for the pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's culture of safeguarding is strong. Parents comment on this positively. Pupils can explain how to keep themselves safe, including when online. Leaders ensure that risk assessments are in place and adhered to.
- Staff are regularly trained in how to protect their pupils, including those in off-site provision. Child protection policies and procedures are well established and effective. Pupils who require support are well catered for. Leaders recruit adults with care, using the correct procedures to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan lessons well and resourcefully to meet most pupils' needs. Staff demonstrate good knowledge of their subjects. The school's focus on carefully planning the knowledge and skills pupils will acquire ensures that many pupils make good progress over time.
- Teachers' effective questioning draws out and develops pupils' ideas and consolidates their learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Pupils are clear that staff are kind and supportive.
- Pupils receive helpful guidance from staff, which supports their progress. Parents and pupils value the homework that staff set and the online system for checking what pupils are learning.
- There remain inconsistencies in the quality of teaching in some subjects, including mathematics and science, where there has been some difficulty in recruiting and

retaining subject specialists.

- Occasionally, teaching does not ensure that the most able make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils are very well cared for. They demonstrate high levels of happiness and well-being. One typical comment was that staff 'care about how I feel'. Pupils are proud of their school and feel successful.
- Pupils know how to stay safe. They are sensible and careful when crossing the road on the way to school. They show sensitivity and respect for others.
- The school is highly inclusive. Pupils are typically very welcoming and appreciative of difference in all its forms. They said that the school helps them to be the person they want to be.
- The school provides excellent pastoral care for its pupils. Pupils who are vulnerable in some way or who experience difficulties are offered first-class support and help. This enables them to re-engage quickly with their learning.
- Communication with staff is effective. When needed, teachers liaise with parents and external agencies quickly and highly effectively. The school's communications and record-keeping are excellent. Pupils and parents are understandably effusive in their praise. One parent typically said: 'The few times I have contacted the school I have had prompt and helpful responses that have resolved the issues raised. Staff seem to genuinely care about any problems pupils might be having.'
- The school works in close partnership with other local schools to support pupils' well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' conduct around the school is safe and sensible. They are friendly, polite and helpful. They are usually punctual to lessons.
- The school's behaviour policy is well organised and applied consistently by staff. Pupils know what is expected of them. They typically abide by the school's rules and the values encompassed in the 'Tallis Character' statement.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They work hard in general and are ready to learn. In some classes when pupils occasionally chatter or fidget, they respond quickly to reminders from staff about the behaviour that is expected.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils say that any issues are quickly resolved by staff.
- Over the past year, pupils' attendance has increased and is above average. Exclusions have reduced to below average. These are positive indications of the school's ongoing improvement.

- Pupils who attend alternative provision off-site also have successful outcomes. Their learning and well-being are carefully checked.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make a strong start in Years 7 and 8. They are enthused by the creative and engaging curriculum. For instance, younger pupils learn about the civil rights campaigner Rosa Parks through drama activities.
- The school's commitment to arts subjects is reflected in pupils' outcomes. Many pupils learn instruments successfully or sing and participate in dance and drama activities. Pupils and parents pointed out how these subjects are motivational and build pupils' confidence across the curriculum. Many parents made a similar point. One parent, typical of many, said: 'Being able to study dance at Thomas Tallis has had such a positive effect on my child's overall education – driven to do well in all subjects.'
- Reading for pleasure is promoted well. Year 7 pupils demonstrate good comprehension, read accurately and, where needed, apply their phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) skills correctly. They show that they enjoy regular reading.
- In 2018, GCSE results were slightly above average.
- Pupils' performance in mathematics, however, has been below the national average for three years. Due to significant changes in the organisation of this subject since September 2018, pupils have now started to make markedly better progress.
- Overall, historically, the progress made from their starting points by lower- and middle-attaining pupils is stronger than that of higher-attaining pupils.
- Improvement in the progress of disadvantaged pupils, identified by the short inspection in January 2018, has continued. However, there is still a difference between the progress of this group and others in the school.
- Pupils achieve well. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and pupils with SEND, including those in the specially resourced provision, make good progress over time.
- Pupils are very well prepared for their next stage of life and education. Almost all pupils move on to carefully considered and worthwhile education, work, or apprenticeships when they leave the school.

16 to 19 study programmes

Outstanding

- The school has a large, highly successful and very well organised sixth form, which continues to build on its strong, long-term track record. It is competently and enthusiastically led.
- Sixth-form teaching is outstanding. Teachers are very adept at helping students to think deeply, find solutions, and develop the higher skills and understanding needed for A level and equivalent courses. Staff know the examination and qualification specifications very closely.

- For example, teaching in physics engages pupils in challenging investigations about electricity. Well-tailored support and advice enables students to take the initiative.
- Staff promote English and mathematics skills very effectively. Students who need to retake GCSE examinations in these subjects fare well.
- The sixth form is highly inclusive. It offers a very wide range of academic and practical subjects. Students' attendance rates are high.
- Students feel secure and looked after. They behave very well and are enthused by their learning. They have many opportunities to help others. They do much to support younger pupils in the school, as mentors for example.
- Students generally make excellent progress in their courses, fully complete them, and achieve very strong grades at A level and in vocational subjects.
- Students with SEND, including those entering from the school's specially resourced provision, are provided for and achieve well.
- The sixth form is very popular and oversubscribed. Students like the structures and systems of the school alongside some of the freedoms of a college. Most Thomas Tallis Year 11 pupils transfer to the sixth form, and it also recruits high numbers of external entrants. The transition from Year 11 to Year 12 is carefully and successfully managed. Many students travel long distances to the school and see their attendance as a privilege.
- Staff listen to their students and offer them meticulous advice. Students are well prepared for their future education, careers and the world of work. Most students gain places at the universities of their choice, with many going to Russell Group universities, including several at Oxbridge. Many students, too, are accepted at their chosen art colleges, often gaining places at the most competitive institutions.
- Parents are justifiably very pleased with the school. One typical comment was: 'The sixth form at Thomas Tallis is excellent, and we are delighted our child chose it. I do recommend it to all prospective parents.'

School details

Unique reference number	100190
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	10052795

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,928
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	550
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Farrant
Headteacher	Carolyn Roberts
Telephone number	020 8856 0115
Website	www.thomastallischool.com
Email address	vcummins@thomastallis.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 January 2018

Information about this school

- This is a very large secondary school with a sixth form. It serves a suburban area with much new housing development close by.
- More pupils than average speak English as an additional language, although very few are at an early stage of learning English.
- About two in every five pupils are eligible for pupil premium funding. This proportion is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below average. However, more pupils than average have an education, health and care plan, or equivalent.

- The school uses two alternative providers. One is run by the local authority and the other by NEST, which is connected to Newhaven School, Eltham.
- The school operates specially resourced provision in two bases. Twenty students are supported in the deaf support unit and another twenty are within the support centre for autism spectrum disorder and language impairment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed classes across all year groups and in most subjects, many jointly with senior leaders. They observed around the school before and after the school day, at break and lunchtimes and visited an assembly.
- They held discussions with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, other members of staff and governors. They analysed the opinions of 151 staff members from confidential questionnaires. They met with a representative from the local authority.
- They met with several groups of pupils and students formally and informally, and heard pupils from Year 7 read. No questionnaires were received from pupils.
- Inspectors evaluated documents, including the school's strategic plans and evaluations, minutes of meetings, assessment information, pupil premium information, records of attendance and behaviour, and notes of governors' visits.
- They took account of the views of 286 parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, and over one hundred written comments received from parents. They also held discussions with parents.

Inspection team

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