

Inspection of Thomas Deacon Academy

Queen's Gardens, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE1 2UW

Inspection dates: 18–19 September 2019

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection **Good**

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a large popular school. The pupil population is a vibrant multicultural mix. Pupils get along well. Many told us how much they value the care and attention of the adults who work with them. Pupils also said how much they like the excellent facilities in the impressive school buildings.

Inspectors saw pupils behaving well and working hard in their lessons and around the buildings in the junior and senior schools. Pupils understand the updated school rules and the 'Thomas Deacon Way'. They say that school is becoming an even calmer place to learn.

Pupils can take part in many extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils are proud to be members of the school's large Combined Cadet Force (CCF).

Pupils told inspectors that they are happy and feel safe. They said that they trust that adults would sort out the few incidents of bullying that occur. A small number of pupils would welcome even more ways to report concerns that they may have.

Sixth-form students choose to study here because they have faith in the teachers and the support that they offer. Students told inspectors that the sixth form is living up to their high expectations.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have high ambitions for what pupils can achieve. Pupils study the full curriculum in key stages 2 and 3. They choose from a wide range of subjects in key stage 4 and 5. Over the past two years, leaders have been changing the curriculum and its delivery. These efforts are paying off. Pupils' work is of a good and improving quality.

Leaders' ambition that higher proportions of pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) is also bearing fruit. Increasing numbers of pupils in key stage 4 are studying EBacc subjects.

The very large majority of pupils behave well. They have positive attitudes to their learning. In a few classes, a small number of pupils can be less focused on their work. This slows their learning and frustrates their classmates.

Curriculum leaders know their subjects well. Their curriculum plans outline what pupils need to learn and how they will add to earlier knowledge. Inspectors saw strong examples of this in art, English, history and languages. These plans are not as well established in key stage 3 science.

Teachers have a good grasp of their subjects and how to teach them. They check pupils' understanding and help those who are not sure or who get stuck. Pupils are confident to speak in lessons. Pupils use knowledge from their previous learning

with ease to discuss more complicated work. This was noticeable in art, English, history and religious education.

Leaders know it is important for pupils to read well. In the junior school, pupils who find reading tough get expert help so that they can catch up. This support continues for as long as pupils need it. Many pupils become more confident readers.

Pupils in the junior school study a wide range of subjects. The curriculum in these subjects is well thought out. On occasion, in subjects such as history and languages, some Year 7 pupils repeat aspects of Year 6 work, but this work does not improve their understanding. Teachers do not give enough thought to what these few pupils already know and can do.

Staff look after pupils well and provide impressive opportunities for personal development. Adults prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy their discussions about social and political issues. They said that this helps them to understand and appreciate different points of view.

Leaders have high expectations for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Most teachers plan so that pupils with SEND learn well. However, in some classes, teachers are not using the most useful teaching strategies to meet pupils' specific learning needs well enough.

Students are doing well in the sixth form. Teachers have detailed subject knowledge and make good use of it. They think carefully about what order they will teach individual parts of each topic. This helps students to get to grips with complex ideas. Leaders provide students with the time and facilities to carry out learning on their own. Students make good use of these. Students told inspectors that they get useful advice to help them to make the right choices about their future.

Leaders are dedicated to providing all pupils with the best quality of education and care. Leaders reflect on what is working and make changes where they are needed. They take stock of staff views and act to improve their well-being. Leaders make sure that teachers get appropriate training. Governors share leaders' dedication. They know what is strong and what needs to improve in the school. The Thomas Deacon Education Trust (the trust) supports and challenges governors well. The trust also provides leaders with expert help to develop their subjects when it is needed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders give safeguarding the highest priority. Staff are trained to carry out their safeguarding duties well. They know it is important that they are alert to any signs that may suggest that a pupil is unsafe.

Pupils get the information they need so that they can keep themselves safe from

risks that they may face.

Leaders have put systems in place so that staff take appropriate action when a pupil needs of extra care and support. These systems work well.

Leaders carry out the necessary checks on staff working at the school. Leaders maintain records of these checks accurately.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Curriculum leaders in science have made changes to how the curriculum is planned and delivered. Leaders should review the amendments that they are making to the key stage 3 curriculum. They should make sure that this area of the science curriculum has the cohesion evident in other key stages and in other subjects.
- About 90 pupils progress from the junior school to the senior school. In some subjects, such as history and languages, leaders need to change aspects of the key stage 3 curriculum so that it builds more coherently on what these pupils learn in key stage 2.
- Leaders have high expectations for all pupils, including those with SEND. Pupils with SEND are provided for well in most subject areas. Leaders should make sure that teachers support these pupils to learn equally effectively in all lessons.
- Leaders have put in place a strong and effective pastoral care system. Very many pupils told inspectors how well cared for they are. A very small number of pupils said that they would like even more ways to report any worries that they may have. Pastoral leaders should review and, where necessary, make adjustments to the many avenues through which pupils can report any concerns.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government

pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	135263
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10058789
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2308
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	356
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees (TDET)
Chair of trust	Richard Barnes
Principal	Rick Carroll
Website	www.thomasdeaconacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 July 2015

Information about this school

- Thomas Deacon Academy is a very large school that provides education for pupils from Year 3 through to Year 13. Pupils of all ages are educated on the same site.
- The school makes use of Alternative Curriculum Education to provide part-time provision for a small number of pupils. This provision is unregistered.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND in the school is lower than that found nationally.
- Since the previous inspection a new principal has taken up their position. He has been in post since April 2019.
- Leaders gathers the opinions of staff on a regular basis and act appropriately on what these surveys tell them.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspectors met with: the principal; several other members of the school's senior leadership team; the special educational needs coordinator; curriculum leaders; teachers; support staff; governors; trustees; and two representatives from the local authority.
- Inspectors also spoke with very many pupils throughout the course of the inspection. Inspectors also spoke with a small number of parents at the start of the school day.
- The subjects considered as part of this inspection were: art; English; history; languages; mathematics; and science. In each subject inspectors: visited lessons; met curriculum leaders; met teachers; spoke with pupils; and looked at pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding inspectors viewed the school's website, reviewed school policies, met with the designated safeguarding leader, spoke with pupils, spoke with parents, spoke with teachers, spoke with support staff, checked school records of safeguarding checks carried out of adults working at the school, sampled records of actions that leaders take when a pupil needs extra support, took account of the school's surveys of parents' opinions, took account of responses to Ofsted's pupil, parent and staff surveys, spoke with a representative from the local authority, and spoke with governors and trustees.

Inspection team

John Lucas, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Shan Oswald	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Nutman	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Garrett	Ofsted Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Ofsted Inspector

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