

Inspection of School Returners/Young Mums Provision

Thornhill Academy, Thornholme Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR2 7NA

Inspection dates: 30–31 January 2020

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are introduced to the provision with care. They are given every opportunity to build their confidence and be successful. The headteacher is ambitious and very enthusiastic. The staff share his enthusiasm. Staff ensure they understand how they can support their pupils to do well. Staff have high expectations of the academic standards that pupils can achieve.

Although improving, the curriculum could be even better in some subjects. An example of the improvements is the increasing number of qualifications that pupils can now study.

Pupils say that they feel safe at the provision. They are confident that staff will help them, whatever their worries. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. As one parent said, 'My child has come on leaps and bounds and is a different child. He is doing well and is more confident. The staff are a marvellous team.' Leaders and teachers have a real passion for doing their best for pupils.

Pupils work hard. Their behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and friendly. Pupils say there is no bullying. The range of opportunities available for pupils to develop their interests is impressive. For example, pupils visit the music venues and the theatre, learn to play a musical instrument or join the police cadets. The recent song competition showed off pupils' song writing skills. This exciting experience led to a wonderful performance to share with others.

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

The headteacher ensures that all staff consider how they can help pupils be successful. He is highly skilled and ambitious for the provision. The headteacher has made some positive changes to improve the quality of education pupils receive. Staff and governors are 'on-side'. The school is back on track and improving strongly.

Pupils start following difficulties attending school. Staff let the pupils know they are there to help. They take care to assess the support pupils need to achieve and flourish. Pupils speak positively about their experiences in lessons. Teachers adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils well. This is especially the case for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

In all subjects, leaders have identified the important learning that pupils need to cover. In many subjects, subject leaders' plans are strong. Teachers use them well to plan lessons so that pupils can understand topics step by step. Teachers help pupils to identify important knowledge for learning. In religious education (RE), for example, topics are covered twice so that nothing is missed. This is helpful for pupils who start in the middle of a year. In science, curriculum plans are very logical and structured. The science that pupils learn becomes more complex over time.

Leaders know there is work to do to make sure that all subjects are equally as strong. Leaders are improving how they use assessment, and they are correct to do so. Leaders want to help teachers to identify where pupils need to improve even more precisely.

Pupils like to read as it often helps them to relax. Staff are quick to help pupils with their reading should they need it. Leaders choose books that are interesting with sounds they know. Pupils soon enjoy reading and read more.

Leaders ensure they prepare pupils for life after school. Leaders make sure that pupils leave with a range of qualifications to help them as they move on to their next steps in education, employment or training. Teachers are successful in developing pupils' social skills and independence. The recent independent travel training is an example of this. There is well-planned career advice. No pupil leaves school without firm plans for the future. Teachers celebrate the uniqueness and potential of each individual.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. All appropriate checks are made on staff to establish their suitability to work with pupils. All staff and governors are appropriately trained in safeguarding. Staff know what to do if they have any concerns. Leaders are vigilant in following up concerns and working with external agencies to keep pupils free from harm. The pastoral care in the school is a strength. Staff ensure that pupils are well looked after and supported. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has identified that in some subjects, curriculum plans do not build on what pupils know and can do from their time in primary schools. As a result, pupils are not well enough prepared for their GCSE courses. Leaders should ensure that the key stage 3 curriculum prepares pupils well for key stage 4.
- Leaders are improving assessment, for example when pupils complete assessments at the end of topics. Here, teachers work to identify exactly what pupils can do and what their next steps are. There are occasions when teachers do not address misconceptions in the curriculum before they move on to a new topic. This means that some pupils struggle to apply this knowledge to later learning. Leaders should ensure that the good practice seen in some subjects is used across the curriculum.

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 are the school and you are 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	135642
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10121711
Type of school	Alternative provision
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	21
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of local academy board	Mrs Denise Nicholson
Headteacher	Ian Redford
Website	No website
Date of previous inspection	12–13 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a 32-place provision which supports anxious and phobic pupils and young mums. It is commissioned by Together for Children, Sunderland Council. The school returners provision is based in Thornhill Academy. The Young Mums' provision is based off-site in Ryhope. Thornhill Academy is part of Consilium Academies.
- There are no pupils in Young Mums. The accommodation at Ryhope is currently used on a part-time basis by students who have left the provision supported by health and social care.

Information about this inspection

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

- We met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team. We talked to curriculum leaders and those with responsibility for individual subjects. We met members of the governing body, including the chair. We met with a Together for Children officer. We spoke to leaders with responsibility for pupils' personal development and their behaviour. We spoke to the special educational

needs coordinator and looked at the systems for supporting individual pupils' needs.

- We looked in detail at English, mathematics, RE and science. We talked to leaders and teachers about their curriculum plans. We visited lessons in these subjects. We spoke to pupils about their learning. We looked at pupils' work.
- We met with those responsible for safeguarding. We looked at a range of documentation linked to safeguarding, including: child protection policies and procedures; absence data; information about how pupils' behaviour is managed; and information about how more vulnerable pupils are supported. We talked to pupils during the inspection about how safe they feel.
- We considered the three telephone responses from parents and the school's survey for parents. There were not enough responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to consider.
- We considered the views from a meeting with a group of staff and the eight responses to Ofsted's online confidential questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Ann Muxworthy, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Patricia Head

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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