

Inspection of Sir Thomas Wharton Academy

Tait Avenue, Edlington, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN12 1HH

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September 2021

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| Overall effectiveness | Good |
| The quality of education | Good |
| Behaviour and attitudes | Good |
| Personal development | Good |
| Leadership and management | Good |
| Sixth-form provision | Good |
| Previous inspection grade | Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 |

What is it like to attend this school?

The strong focus on fostering pupils' character gives the school a distinctive feel. Pupils are proud of their school. They look smart and keep the school site tidy. Pupils enjoy positive relationships with staff. Pupils learn about the importance of respect, integrity and compassion. Staff set a good example and pupils conduct themselves in a mature way. Pupils are polite and helpful to visitors. They are excellent ambassadors for their school.

Leaders set high standards for pupils in all aspects of school life. Pupils respond well to the challenges set. This has led to many improvements in the school over recent years. Pupils recognise how behaviour has improved a great deal. There is now a clear behaviour policy, which pupils understand. Pupils like the fact that the policy includes rewards as well as sanctions. As a result, the atmosphere in the school is calm and orderly. Pupils want to do well in lessons. Pupils like the presence of staff on corridors at lesson changeover time.

Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular activities on offer. Many activities could not take place last year due to COVID-19. Some activities have restarted now at lunchtime and after school. The number of activities is increasing.

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

Leaders and governors are determined to raise aspirations, improve academic achievement and develop pupils' character. What is best for the pupil is at the heart of their thinking at all times. They have developed a curriculum designed to achieve these objectives. Within this curriculum, there is plenty of time given to pupils' personal development.

Provision for pupils' personal development is at the heart of this school. Pupils study life skills, including topics such as relationships and consent. Pupils learn to respect one another and to contribute to the wider community. There is a comprehensive programme of careers guidance. Leaders provided virtual work experience during the periods when the school was closed to most pupils last year. There are many opportunities for pupils to learn about and meet employers. The school fully meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide students in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

The outcomes pupils achieved in 2019 were not strong. Leaders acted swiftly to identify the reasons for this. Much has been done to improve the curriculum and the quality of teaching since then.

Curriculum planning is detailed and well sequenced. Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach ideas and concepts that challenge pupils to think deeply. Pupils say they learn more now. Lessons include opportunities for pupils to revise and go over their learning from the past. Teachers check on pupils' understanding

regularly and more formally at key points across the year. Some departments have embedded the new curriculum more than others. Leaders are aware of this and are determined to eliminate any variability across the school.

Teachers cover the knowledge set out in the national curriculum. The number of pupils entered for the English Baccalaureate group of subjects (English, mathematics, science, history/geography, and languages) is increasing.

Leaders are ambitious for all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers are trained to use information on pupils to tailor tasks to suit the needs of pupils with SEND. There are effective programmes to support pupils who join the school with weaker reading skills. In addition, leaders give a high priority to developing reading for all pupils. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have a reading lesson on their timetable each week.

The calm and respectful atmosphere in school means that pupils learn without disruption. Low-level disruption is rare. Pupils say teachers apply the school's behaviour policy in a fair and consistent way. Exclusion has been used appropriately and as a last resort. The most recent attendance figures show improvement. However, leaders accept there is still work to do to improve attendance and reduce the number of pupils who are regularly absent.

The sixth form is small and students value the individual support they receive. The link with another sixth form in the trust strengthens the curriculum offer for students. The school curriculum is planned appropriately from Years 7 to 13 in most areas. As a result, the sixth-form curriculum has the same strengths as in the rest of the school. Teaching is carefully planned and challenges students. Leaders check closely the progress of every student and provide effective support for any student who is falling behind.

The senior leadership team and governors lead the school with integrity. They make decisions in the best interests of pupils. Leaders are sensitive to the workload of staff. Staff like the fact they see leaders so often around the school. Staff morale in the school is high.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The principal is the designated safeguarding leader, and she has an experienced deputy. Keeping pupils safe is central to the school's culture. No stone is left unturned in efforts to protect pupils from harm. Leaders respond to safeguarding issues in a timely way, using other agencies where appropriate. Staff pick up safeguarding issues early and report any concerns promptly. Leaders are very thorough in the checks they carry out on new staff.

Pupils feel safe and have the confidence in staff to help them solve any problems which may arise. In lessons, pupils learn about a wide range of potential risks to their safety.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have started to re-establish the programme of extra-curricular activities, with some new additions. However, pupil participation rates are not as high as leaders would want. Leaders should ensure that the extra-curricular programme caters for the needs of all pupils, including those deemed disadvantaged.
- Leaders have amended the school's curriculum more recently. Inspection evidence demonstrates that subject leaders understand the importance of curriculum sequencing and identification of important subject content. However, some subjects are further ahead than others in terms of putting this into practice. This means that in some subjects, pupils do not always have the background knowledge or understanding to learn new topics as well as they might. Leaders should ensure that all subject leaders amend and improve the curriculum so that pupils learn subject content in a deliberate and sequential way that helps them to know more and remember more over time.
- Rates of attendance compare favourably to those recorded prior to the pandemic. However, overall rates of absence and persistent absence remain high. Too many pupils are missing important parts of their education. Leaders should strengthen their efforts to improve pupils' attendance so that pupils attend school more than they have done in the past.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| Unique reference number | 144364 |
| Local authority | Doncaster |
| Inspection number | 10200743 |
| Type of school | Secondary Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy sponsor-led |
| Age range of pupils | 11 to 18 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 1054 |
| Of which, number on roll in the sixth form | 107 |
| Appropriate authority | Board of trustees |
| Chair of governing body | Robbie McRobbie |
| Principal | Yvonne Bootman |
| Website | www.stwacademy.com |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |

Information about this school

- Sir Thomas Wharton Academy was brokered by the Maltby Learning Trust on 1 April 2017.
- The sixth form is run jointly with Maltby Academy.
- The school is an average-sized school, but the number on the school roll is increasing.
- The academy uses three alternative providers. Pupils attend Future Pathways, The Levett School or St Wilfrid's School.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors met with the principal and other senior leaders, leaders of the sixth form and safeguarding leaders. Inspectors also met with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, a trustee and two leaders of the trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, business studies, computing and information and communication technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Additional visits were made to observe learning across a wide range of subjects, including the sixth form. A meeting was held with the special educational needs coordinator and an inspector looked at support plans for pupils with SEND.
- Inspectors met with leaders for safeguarding and reviewed records of the school's work to protect vulnerable pupils. An inspector looked at the record of vetting checks made on adults who work in the school. Meetings were held with pupils to explore their understanding of how to stay safe.
- Inspectors looked at 112 responses to the pupil survey, 60 responses to the staff survey and 106 responses to Ofsted's Parent View survey. Inspectors also considered 105 free-text responses from parents.

Inspection team

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|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| David Pridding, lead inspector | Ofsted Inspector |
| Julian Appleyard | Ofsted Inspector |
| Erica Hiorns | Ofsted Inspector |
| Steve Wren | Her Majesty's Inspector |

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