

Inspection of an outstanding school: Townley Grammar School

Townley Road, Bexleyheath, Kent DA6 7AB

Inspection dates:

24 and 25 November 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are confident, articulate and ambitious. They appreciate the range of curriculum subjects on offer at the school. Pupils respond maturely to their teachers' high expectations and are committed to their studies.

Pupils are encouraged to find and pursue new interests in addition to their academic subjects and have many opportunities to do so. The school's 21C and character and well-being (CWB) enrichment programmes help pupils to gain insight into an extensive range of themes. Pupils learn about topics such as the history and experiences of different communities in London and application of art to social and political situations, and discuss the arguments for and against social media. The school organises a wide variety of extra-curricular clubs and activities.

Pupils are encouraged to develop skills in leadership, debating and chairing meetings. They take on a variety of roles such as anti-bullying ambassadors. Senior heads of house in the sixth form gather and represent views of younger pupils and coordinate fundraising activities.

Pupils feel safe at school. They behave well in lessons and around the school. Generally, pupils enjoy school. Bullying does not happen often. If it does, staff are quick to help. Occasionally, pupils feel that their interactions with teachers could be more productive when trying to resolve any concerns.

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

Leaders have high expectations for all pupils' academic achievement. Leaders have carefully thought about the order in which pupils learn essential content in each subject. Teaching helps pupils to remember key facts. Pupils achieve highly. Teachers apply their

strong subject knowledge to develop pupils' understanding of subject content and use of technical vocabulary, before moving on to more complex ideas. Teachers provide pupils with many opportunities to enhance their learning through reading high-quality texts.

Teachers routinely use assessment to check for any gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers make sure pupils know the essential facts they need for more advanced studies.

Selected pupils who need additional help, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the support they need to achieve as well as others.

Pupils interact positively at social times and collaborate sensibly in lessons. Pupils told inspectors, and leaders' records show, that any distracting behaviour in lessons is very rare. Most staff who completed the survey are positive about pupils' behaviour.

Relationships and sex education (RSE) is an established part of the CWB programme. Leaders regularly review and revise the content of this part of the curriculum in consideration of the context and characteristics of different year groups. For example, during periods of lockdown due to COVID-19, leaders changed the order in which sensitive topics were taught so that these were covered when pupils were back in school rather than remotely. Leaders work with outside organisations to provide specialist support and guidance to pupils in some aspects of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and RSE, including sexual health and risky behaviours.

There is a well-established programme of careers education. Older pupils, including in the sixth form, are encouraged to consider a wide range of careers. They are shown how to write their curriculum vitae and helped to get ready for university applications.

Leaders have increased the number of staff with pastoral responsibilities in recent times. Most pupils can identify a member of staff they would speak to if they had any worries. However, pupils expressed varied views in discussions with inspectors, and in the online survey for pupils, about the effectiveness of the school's efforts to support their well-being. Some pupils were doubtful that talking to adults in the school would help them to resolve any concerns.

Leaders have increased the opportunities for having discussions with staff and pupils and receiving feedback about aspects of life at school. Pupils and staff appreciate this. Some staff and some pupils felt that communication from leaders could be clearer. They would like to be better informed about the decisions leaders take in response to the issues that staff and pupils raise during discussions. They would like more involvement in determining new policies and procedures.

Most staff who spoke to inspectors and completed the survey were positive about the school and said that they enjoy working there. However, some staff expressed concerns about their workload and the impact this has on their well-being. Leaders have plans to provide more support for staff mental health, including a well-being forum.

There is no evidence of gaming or off-rolling.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders promote a safeguarding culture in the school. They have recently improved systems for making referrals and provide regular training and updates. Staff are vigilant for possible safeguarding warning signs, feel confident to take action, and respond quickly to any concerns. The school liaises with outside agencies to ensure pupils gain the support they need.

The safeguarding team communicates with parents, staff and pupils about keeping safe, including in the local community and online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some pupils are unsure about who they would talk to in school if they have any worries, and doubt whether talking to staff is helpful. This has an impact on their well-being. Leaders should continue their ongoing discussions with pupils about this issue and promote the sources of support available to pupils in school. They should follow up and take appropriate actions in response to pupils' views in order to ensure that all pupils know how to, and do, access support when needed, and have confidence that this will help them.
- Some staff are concerned about their workload and do not feel that leaders engage with them enough when changes to policy and practice in the school are introduced. This has an impact on staff well-being. Leaders should implement their planned initiatives to support staff mental health and well-being, including increased opportunities to consult staff on their views and involve them in discussions.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2015.

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 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

Unique reference number	137769
Local authority	Bexley
Inspection number	10199473
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1611
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	414
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Aamer Safdar
Headteacher	Nevita Pandya
Website	www.townleygrammar.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	25 and 26 November 2015, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher was appointed in April 2020. The headteacher at the time of the previous inspection is the chief executive officer of the trust.

Information about this inspection

- 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 school leaders, including the headteacher, the chief executive officer, the chair of the trustees and the chair of governors. Inspectors also met with groups of staff and groups of pupils, and held conversations with pupils and staff around the school.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, English, history and science. This included visiting lessons, meeting with subject leaders, talking to pupils and looking at their work.
- Inspectors looked at other subjects taught in the school, including geography, design and technology, and PSHE and RSE. Inspectors visited several activities, including a session for boys in Year 12 run by visiting speakers and a meeting of the senior heads of house. Inspectors considered a wide range of school documentation, including school policies and behaviour records.
- Inspectors met with leaders with responsibility for safeguarding, looked at the school's records of safeguarding concerns, and spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took into account responses to surveys completed by staff, pupils and parents. They also considered correspondence received from parents.

Inspection team

Amanda Carter-Fraser, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ian Morris	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Hook	Ofsted Inspector

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