

Inspection of Thomas Bennett Community College

Ashdown Drive, Tilgate, Crawley, West Sussex RH10 5AD

Inspection dates: 5 and 6 October 2022

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	Requires Improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders have worked relentlessly to create an inclusive and caring culture throughout the school. They have been successful and staff, governors and pupils now describe this school as a 'family'. Pupils are proud of their school. Those who are new to the school feel welcome. Pupils feel happy and safe here. They trust adults in school to help them if necessary. Bullying is very rare and, when it does happen, staff deal with it quickly and sensitively.

Leaders have high expectations of all pupils. Pupils study a broad range of subjects. Subject leaders have thoughtfully reviewed their curriculum design and how well it is taught. Teachers mostly support and challenge pupils effectively, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Relationships between teachers and pupils are positive. Most pupils contribute to a calm and positive working environment in lessons. At social times, a small number of pupils sometimes struggle to regulate their behaviour. Staff are on hand to support these pupils if necessary.

The personal development programme teaches pupils about healthy and safe lifestyles and prepares them well for the future. Pupils appreciate the provision of a range of extra-curricular activities and leadership roles.

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

Leaders have worked hard, including with other schools in the trust, to ensure their curriculum planning is carefully sequenced. Knowledge and skills build up logically over time. Teachers use planned assessments effectively to inform their teaching and feedback to pupils. Leaders are equally ambitious for all pupils. Most pupils with SEND are supported successfully to follow the same curriculum in lessons with their peers.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. Across the school, including in the sixth form, they select appropriate teaching and assessment strategies which ensure that pupils remember what they have learned and can apply it fluently. However, some teachers do not make sure that pupils have enough opportunity to practise what they have been taught and to embed it securely in their long-term memory before moving on. Some pupils are therefore not able to use what they have learned as accurately and spontaneously as they should.

Leaders have put in place an effective reading programme. Additional reading support is offered to pupils who fall behind, and leaders have recently introduced a phonics programme to strengthen this further. This is not yet embedded.

Staff care deeply about pupils. Leaders have developed staff's expertise so that pupils' diverse needs can be met. For example, in addition to specialist support for pupils with SEND, there is very effective provision for pupils who speak English as an

additional language. Staff are also trained in therapeutic approaches so they can support pupils who are coping with a range of issues at home or in school.

Around the school, behaviour and attitudes are positive, and relationships are generally respectful. Low-level disruption is not tolerated. Movement around the school is mostly orderly, and sixth-formers act as positive role models. However, some pupils' behaviour can be inappropriately boisterous, especially outside lessons. Staff are visible around the site to manage the occasional incidents. This presence helps to foster positive relationships with pupils, who are very confident to speak to school staff if they are worried.

Leaders know the school's community very well and have built up positive local partnerships. This means that the personal development programme is targeted effectively. Leaders are determined to give pupils as many experiences beyond the academic and vocational curriculum as possible. Pupils are offered a range of opportunities to participate in sports and other activities, and to take on leadership roles. The Football Academy plays a key role in this. Personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education is well designed to ensure pupils receive the relevant information for their age. Careers education is effective and benefits from strong local business links.

Staff are incredibly positive about the executive headteacher and head of school. Many staff have stayed at the school over a turbulent period because of the effective way that senior leaders have included them in the school's improvement. Staff also value leaders' exceptionally supportive and inclusive approach to staff well-being. They feel that their workload is suitably managed and they say that their professional development needs are well met. Some staff are now taking on leadership roles at trust level to share their practice.

Governors and trustees are enthusiastic and have a good understanding of the school. They receive appropriate training so they can discharge their statutory duties and hold leaders to account. They visit the school regularly, along with members of the trust executive team, and receive quality reports about standards and progress.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school has a strong safeguarding culture. Leadership in this area is strong also. Pupils' welfare and safety are a high priority for the school. Leaders understand local issues and work proactively with partners to provide both education and support. Specialist staff meet the safeguarding needs of different groups of pupils. Pupils feel safe and supported.

Staff receive regular safeguarding training and frequent updates. They know how to identify risks and what to do if they have any concerns. The single central record is compliant. Referrals to external agencies are timely and record-keeping is thorough.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Teachers in some subjects do not consistently ensure that pupils embed key knowledge in their long-term memory. As a result, some pupils are not able to remember and use what they have learned well. Leaders must ensure that all teachers have effective strategies to help pupils recall and apply key knowledge fluently before moving on to new learning.
- The school's behaviour expectations and culture are not as well embedded in social time as in lessons. This means that a few pupils do not always behave as well outside lessons as they do in class. Leaders must ensure that behaviour systems and inclusion strategies are consistently applied to all areas of school life so that all pupils self-regulate more effectively, including in unstructured time.
- Some strategies to support pupils in the early stages of reading are in their infancy. This means that reading support is not always targeted as well as it could be to enable all pupils to become fluent readers. Leaders must implement their chosen phonics programme fully.

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.

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	138620
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	10241523
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1274
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	161
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Gaenor Bagley
Headteacher	Stuart Smith (executive headteacher) Emer Lesova (head of school)
Website	https://www.thomasbennett-tkat.org
Date of previous inspection	8 July 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thomas Bennett Community College is part of The Kemnal Academies Trust. The trust delegates some responsibilities to a local governing body.
- The current executive headteacher was the headteacher at the time of the last inspection. He is supported by a head of school.
- The school has a resource base for a small number of pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Nearly all these pupils access the mainstream curriculum with support from this unit.
- The school has a partnership with Chelsea Football Club to run post-16 coaching courses for about 100 students through its Football Academy.

- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- A small number of pupils attend the three registered alternative providers and three unregistered providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, science, geography, languages, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons in a number of other subjects that were taking place at the time of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils from all year groups and took into account the responses to the pupil survey.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, staff and those with responsibility for governance, including a representative of the board of trustees. They also spoke to trust executives and scrutinised minutes of the school's board.
- Inspectors observed pupils at different times during the school day, including during tutor time, assemblies, breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors scrutinised attendance, behaviour and bullying records.
- Inspectors met with the special educational needs coordinator to discuss the provision for pupils with SEND. They visited lessons to look at the support these pupils were receiving.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the confidential staff survey. They took account of the responses to Ofsted Parent View.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors looked at the school's website and policies, met with leaders and spoke with pupils and staff. They scrutinised school records of the safeguarding checks carried out on adults working at the school and spoke with trustees. They scrutinised a sample of child protection records.

Inspection team

Mary Davies, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ian Cooksey

Ofsted Inspector

Mike Serridge

Ofsted Inspector

John Burridge

Ofsted Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022