

Inspection of Thurstable School Sports College and Sixth Form Centre

Maypole Road, Tiptree, Colchester, Essex CO5 0EW

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 September, and 8 December 2022

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are generally happy and feel safe at school. They know whom to report concerns to, including about bullying, and that staff will help. They know that teachers have consistent expectations, and that lessons will be calm and focused.

Pupils are expected to achieve well. Lessons are interesting and make sense for most pupils. Knowledgeable teachers plan learning that links with what they have taught before. However, some pupils, including some with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), struggle with the work. This is because some teachers do not teach subjects well, and some do not ensure that what pupils are taught is adapted well enough for them.

Pupils have had concerns about behaviour in the past. However, because of raised expectations and well-understood systems being in place, behaviour has improved. Most pupils attend school well. However, there remains a small minority who do not attend as regularly as they should.

Pupils have a range of opportunities to pursue their talents and interests through schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and a partnership with a professional football club. Pupils are now receiving better advice than in the past to keep them informed about what they can do after leaving school.

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

Leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum. They have carefully set out what pupils need to learn in each subject. They have provided training to help teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively. Teachers commonly provide clear explanations and check what pupils know. Where pupils do not understand, teachers provide further support. Consequently, many pupils build on and link together what they know well over time. However, some teachers have not fully grasped how to teach the curriculum in their subjects well. This means that some pupils still have gaps in what they know, or do not produce high-quality work.

Leaders share information with teachers about pupils with SEND. For pupils who have higher levels of need, such as those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan, this is generally effective and helps pupils to access the same curriculum as others. However, some pupils' needs and the strategies to support them are not precisely identified. Consequently, teachers do not adapt learning well enough and do not ensure that pupils understand what they are being taught. Leaders have provided some training to teachers to address this. However, some of this has been very recent.

Leaders have prioritised reading and have planned class reading time into the school day. Teachers use this time effectively to develop pupils' fluency by exploring with them a range of high-quality texts. However, some of the support leaders have put in place for pupils who find reading particularly difficult does not closely meet their

needs. These pupils make slower progress with learning to read fluently than they should.

Students in the sixth form, including those students with SEND, successfully complete their studies and achieve well. This is because there is a clear rationale in how the curriculum is planned and taught. Leaders and teachers understand the needs of students with SEND well and adapt teaching effectively as a result.

Leaders have introduced a clear behaviour system that all staff and pupils know and understand. Teachers implement this system consistently. As a result, pupils usually learn in a disruption-free environment. Behaviour during breaktimes and lunchtimes has improved because pupils understand the expectations leaders have of them. The school's value of 'respect' is better developed with pupils. This is especially the case in the sixth form, where students show maturity and consistently treat others, including adults, respectfully.

Leaders have established systems and processes to improve pupils' attendance. Leaders have been particularly successful in supporting some pupils to attend school more regularly. Persistent absence has been significantly reduced, and more pupils are attending well. There remains a small group of pupils whose absence is higher than it should be.

Pupils have access to a range of wider opportunities, including residential trips and musical and sporting opportunities. Leaders have improved the provision for advising pupils about their future options. 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. Bespoke careers support is available for pupils. Leaders have improved the personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum. Pupils are now more aware of protected characteristics than they were in the past. The curriculum content supports them well to understand how to form and maintain healthy relationships and to have respect for others. There is, for example, a well-attended LGBTQ+ club.

Leaders listen to staff and consult with them about well-being and workload. Leaders are aware of what needs to be improved and, where they have not already secured improvement, have plans in place to do so.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have worked to establish a culture where safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. They ensure that recruitment and vetting checks are appropriately recorded in the single central record. Staff are well trained in how to spot concerns and identify needs. Leaders have established positive relationships with external agencies, such as social workers and the police. This helps to ensure that pupils get the support they need.

The curriculum content ensures that pupils know how to keep safe in a variety of situations. This includes outside school and particularly when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some teachers do not teach the curriculum in their subjects as well as they need to. This means that some pupils do not learn as much as they should, and some pupils do not produce work of a high quality. Leaders need to ensure that all pupils are taught consistently well.
- Leaders do not precisely identify the needs of pupils with SEND who do not have an EHC plan. Teachers do not adapt their teaching well enough to meet the needs of pupils with SEND. As a result, some pupils with SEND struggle to access the curriculum as well as their peers. Leaders need to ensure that they review the plans in place for pupils with SEND to ensure that the strategies they want teachers to apply are precise enough to enable all staff to meet the needs of all pupils with SEND effectively. This includes those pupils at the early stages of learning to read.
- Leaders' effective work to improve attendance has not been successful with all pupils. A small group of pupils still miss too much time in school. Leaders need to build on their successful groundwork to ensure that all pupils attend school well.

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	137241
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10240157
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	1,194
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Neal Philips
Headteacher	James Ketley
Website	www.thurstable.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2 and 3 November 2021, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Thurstable School Sports College and Sixth Form Centre is a single academy trust.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2020.
- The school makes use of seven alternative providers, four of which are unregistered alternative providers.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspectors first visited the school on 21 and 22 September 2022. Ofsted deemed that further evidence was required to secure the inspection judgements. As a

result, this inspection was deemed 'incomplete'. Three of His Majesty's Inspectors visited the school on 8 December 2022 to gather more evidence about the quality of education for pupils with SEND, behaviour and attitudes, sixth-form provision, and leadership and management, including the effectiveness of safeguarding.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, history, and design and technology. For each deep dive, inspectors met with curriculum 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.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and leaders of provision for PSHE, SEND, behaviour and attendance, sixth form, safeguarding, and personal development. Inspectors also observed breaktimes and lunchtimes. They visited form time, the LGBTQ+ club, an assembly and physical education lessons.
- Inspectors explored the school's safeguarding culture through viewing safeguarding records and procedures, meeting with a range of pupils and staff and talking to safeguarding leaders.
- Inspectors considered the 125 responses and 91 free-text comments made by parents and carers to the survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered 86 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 80 responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

James Chester, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
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Tracy Fielding	His Majesty's Inspector
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