

# Inspection of Thames Park Secondary School

Chadwell Road, Grays RM17 5FP

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Inspection dates: 25 and 26 January 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils are proud of their school. They speak about their ambitions and achievements enthusiastically and articulately. Pupils value school and maintain regular attendance. In lessons, they show commitment to learning and work hard. Pupils support each other well in lessons and often bring the best out of each other. When they find something difficult to learn, pupils seek help from staff during study groups at lunchtime and after school.

The positive ethos at the school is valued and pupils contribute towards this in the way they behave and the way in which they take on positions of leadership. Pupils particularly value the many clubs available. They capably take responsibility to lead clubs for others. They also enjoy extending new interests further. For example, many pupils have been inspired by the clubs to choose to learn to play musical instruments more formally.

Pupils share positive relationships with each other and staff. Pupils feel safe and are safe at school. They say that bullying is uncommon. When bullying does occur, teachers deal with it effectively and it stops. When pupils experience social, emotional or mental health difficulties, they receive effective support. This includes spending time with the well-loved school dog, 'Custard'.

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

Since the school opened in September 2020, leaders' planned curriculum has enabled pupils to learn and achieve well as the school grows. The curriculum is ordered sensibly to help pupils build what they know in appropriate steps. Leaders have provided enough guidance for teachers to plan and deliver effective learning activities. Supported by trust leaders, school leaders have anticipated and delivered effectively the training staff need as new subjects and key stages are added to the school.

Leaders know the importance of ensuring pupils can read fluently to access the rest of the curriculum successfully. Throughout the school, leaders encourage a love of reading. This contributes to pupils' enthusiasm and enjoyment when reading a wide range of texts. Furthermore, it helps ensure pupils are able to apply their reading skills effectively, to achieve well in all areas of the curriculum.

Staff teach effectively so that pupils remember most of what leaders expect them to. They check what pupils have learned effectively. When gaps in learning are evident, staff provide helpful support so that pupils do not fall behind. When the school was opened, leaders' approach to supporting pupils at the earliest stages of reading did not work as well as intended. Recently, leaders introduced different approaches that are starting to have a positive impact.

Leaders accurately identify the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They provide useful guidance for staff to support pupils with

social, emotional and mental health needs. Staff follow this guidance so that these pupils overcome the social and emotional challenges they face. However, leaders' guidance for other pupils' needs is not always useful for staff to plan effective learning activities. When this happens, teaching is not as effective, so some pupils with SEND do not learn as well as they could.

During a time of rapid change and growth, leaders have created a positive learning atmosphere at the school. Pupils concentrate and behave well in lessons. During social times, pupils conduct themselves maturely. Staff understand and use the agreed behaviour policy consistently.

Leaders provide lots of opportunities for pupils to enrich their understanding of the curriculum, themselves and the wider world. Staff enable pupils to consider and discuss the personal issues faced in adult life, including relationships and sexuality. Leaders have carefully chosen visits to places of local, national and international interest to support pupils to deepen their understanding of what they have learned in all subjects.

Leaders have effective careers provision in place. Pupils have many opportunities to explore the wide range of careers and options for their next steps in education, employment and training. Leaders have ensured that the school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause.

Trust and school leaders have put training in place that is helping newer leaders develop their skills to lead larger areas of responsibility. Sometimes leaders' communication with staff and parents is underdeveloped. For example, staff do not always know where they can access the most relevant and accurate information related to pupils' needs. A significant minority of parents do not feel that leaders communicate effectively with them, especially when they have concerns.

Trustees and governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They challenge leaders on the occasions when leaders do not reach trustees' and governors' high expectations.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have trained staff well in safeguarding. They are vigilant to the signs of potential harm. When concerns arise, staff act swiftly and appropriately. Detailed records are maintained and leaders work well with external agencies so that vulnerable pupils receive the help they need.

Leaders make sure that background checks are carried out to determine the suitability of adults working at the school.

The curriculum content ensures pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe both in and out of school. This includes when accessing the internet.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not routinely provide staff with the guidance they need to support pupils with SEND. This leads to staff not supporting some pupils well enough to make the progress they could. Leaders must ensure that staff have the information they need to plan effective learning opportunities for all identified SEND needs, ensuring all pupils with SEND achieve well.
- Leaders have not always clearly communicated the key information for staff and parents. As a result, staff and parents have been uncertain, and on occasions have concerns, about important aspects of the school. Leaders must clearly provide the information that staff and parents need so that they are well informed and fully understand the work of the leaders to develop and improve the school.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	147853
<b>Local authority</b>	Thurrock
<b>Inspection number</b>	10255006
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy free school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	362
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Trisha Jaffe
<b>Headteacher</b>	Kam Bains
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thamespark.org">www.thamespark.org</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school opened in September 2020 in temporary accommodation. In September 2022, the school moved to its current permanent location.
- Leaders have admitted a new year group each year since the opening of the school. Currently, the school provides for pupils in Years 7 to 9. By September 2024, the school will provide education for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 7 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded 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 leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors spoke with trustees, governors, the chief executive of the trust, trust leaders, the headteacher, the special educational needs coordinator, members of the senior leadership team, subject leaders, teachers, members of support staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: art, English, mathematics and modern foreign languages. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at samples of pupils' work in some other subjects.
- Inspectors spoke with leaders and staff about safeguarding policies and practices. Inspectors looked at the register of background checks for adults at the school and also looked at child protection files.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online survey for parents, and the text responses from parents. Inspectors also considered the responses to Ofsted's online surveys for pupils and for staff.

## Inspection team

Al Mistrano, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Elizabeth Shapland

Ofsted Inspector

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