

# Inspection of Thornaby Academy

Baysdale Road, Thornaby, Stockton-on-Tees TS17 9DB

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Inspection dates: 6 and 7 June 2023

## **Overall effectiveness**

## **Requires improvement**

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The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5  
of the Education Act 2005

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

Pupils' experiences at Thornaby Academy vary. Some pupils enjoy school and feel well supported by staff. Other pupils have a less positive view of their school experience. Staff expectations of pupils' participation in lessons varies. Some staff ensure that all pupils are engaged and focused on learning. This is not the case across all classrooms. Leaders have been working to strengthen the curriculum. Some impact of this work is evident, but this continues to be a priority for improvement.

Leaders care deeply about pupils in this small school. They know them well and want the best for them. There are strong pastoral support systems in place, particularly for the more vulnerable pupils. Pupils have adults who they trust in school. The majority of pupils agree that adults take bullying seriously. Pupils know that bullying is unacceptable and do not feel that it is a problem at this school. Some pupils feel that some teachers would take it more seriously than others. Nevertheless, pupils understand the importance of treating people equally. They respect other people's differences.

Leaders have carefully developed pupils' experiences beyond the academic. Extra-curricular clubs are back in place and are growing in popularity. Pupils benefit from a secure careers programme.

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

Leaders have used a range of external support to design a curriculum that is in line with the national curriculum. Pupils study a broad curriculum at key stage 3 and have a range of options at key stage 4. Leaders have considered how pupils will build on prior learning and have organised the curriculum to support this. Leaders are in the process of mapping out the most important knowledge that they want pupils to learn. In some subject areas this is done more successfully. Some subjects are still developing their 'powerful knowledge' to make sure it builds progressively.

Leaders have introduced 'do now activities' across subjects to help pupils remember what they have learned. However, some pupils are not engaging with these activities, and this is not being challenged by staff. Some teachers have higher expectations than others of what pupils should achieve in lessons. Some teachers are not checking effectively what all pupils know before moving on. This means that sometimes gaps in pupils' knowledge go unaddressed. Some pupils remember what they have learned with more success than others. For example, pupils' understanding of English literature was secure. Leaders have committed to developing the importance of reading across the school. Key stage 3 pupils have weekly reading lessons. Pupils who find reading difficult are provided with support.

Teachers use 'one-page profiles' to guide their support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There was evidence of these plans

being followed. However, some of the suggested strategies are not closely matched to pupils' needs, meaning that pupils are not being supported as effectively as they could be.

Behaviour in classrooms is generally compliant. There is some low-level disruption in lessons. Some staff challenge this and some staff do not. Pupils and staff alike all understand the rewards and consequences boards that are a key part of the behaviour system. Leaders are providing staff with ongoing training to ensure that this system is being used consistently. Leaders use a range of strategies to support pupils with more challenging behaviour. These strategies are beginning to have an impact for some pupils who find it difficult to focus and behave well. Leaders analyse behaviour data closely and are proactive in addressing trends that arise.

Many pupils do not attend school regularly enough, including pupils with SEND. Leaders are using a range of new systems and strategies to tackle this. Many of these systems are in their infancy, although there are signs that they are beginning to have an impact.

Pupils have a clear understanding of respect and tolerance. They recognise difference and feel that discrimination is not tolerated at this school. Pupils also have a secure grasp of important topics such as healthy relationships and consent. They recognise that leaders and teachers deliver these messages well. These key messages are delivered in assemblies and tutor time. However, the quality of delivery varies. There are a range of extra-curricular opportunities on offer, but many pupils do not take advantage of these.

Staff are positive about working in this school. They feel that their workload is considered and that leaders are approachable. Leaders have quality assurance systems in place to check the impact of the changes that are being made. However, these systems are not currently precise enough to focus on the key areas for development. This includes for the quality of education that pupils with SEND receive.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are knowledgeable about the risks that pupils might face in the community. They understand what signs to be alert to and how to report any concerns. Pupils have trusted adults in school. They understand how to keep themselves safe online. Leaders are responsive and make sure that pupils are educated about relevant topics.

Recognising the importance of safeguarding, leaders have employed additional staff to ensure pupils are well supported. Leaders closely monitor and track vulnerable pupils through regular inclusion meetings. They keep detailed and thorough logs of actions taken to keep pupils safe. Leaders work with a range of external agencies to ensure that pupils and families get the support that they need.

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

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

- Curriculum thinking is stronger in some subjects than in others. In some subject areas, leaders have not thought carefully enough about what the most important knowledge is that they want pupils to know. Leaders should ensure that the key knowledge they want pupils to know is mapped out across all subject areas.
- Teachers' delivery of the curriculum is too variable. Some teachers are not routinely picking up gaps in pupils' knowledge or addressing misconceptions. Some teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve are too low. Leaders should ensure that further training for staff improves the quality of teaching in some areas.
- The provision for pupils with SEND is inconsistent. Some support plans for pupils with SEND include strategies that are not closely matched to pupils' needs. This means that the support some pupils receive to access the curriculum is not as effective as it could be. Leaders should ensure that strategies in support plans are closely matched to pupils' needs.
- Some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. This has a negative impact on their progress and their school experience. Leaders should ensure that new systems in place to improve attendance are embedded and reduce rates of absence.
- Leaders' quality assurance processes are not precise enough and are, at times, optimistic. This is having an impact on the quality of education. Leaders should ensure there is sufficient rigour in the quality assurance processes in place. Leaders should also provide stronger scrutiny for the quality of education that pupils with SEND receive.

## 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>	148186
<b>Local authority</b>	Stockton-on-Tees
<b>Inspection number</b>	10267824
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	467
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Nikki King
<b>Principal</b>	Donna Butcher
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thornabyacademy.org.uk">www.thornabyacademy.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The school is part of Falcon Education Academies Trust.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision. Two of these alternative providers are registered and two are unregistered.
- The school has an additionally resourced provision for pupils with communication and interaction needs.
- 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.

- Thornaby Academy converted to become an academy school in September 2020. When its predecessor school, Thornaby Academy, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate overall.
- 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 met with a range of senior leaders, including the headteacher. They also spoke with the chair of the academy council by telephone. An inspector met with representatives from the trust, including the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, history, art and science. 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 a sample of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for safeguarding. They checked logs of actions taken to keep pupils safe.
- An inspector checked the single central record and other documentation regarding safe recruitment practices.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils and staff, both formally and informally, during the inspection.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils at social times.
- Inspectors met with leaders responsible for personal development and careers.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes of academy council meetings, the school's self-evaluation and the improvement plan.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online staff questionnaire. They also considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire. Inspectors also considered additional communications from parents. There were no responses to the pupil survey.

## Inspection team

Katie Spurr, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Farr	Ofsted Inspector
Chris Fletcher	Ofsted Inspector

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