

# Inspection of a good school: Thomas Tallis School

Kidbrooke Park Road, London SE3 9PX

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Inspection dates:

20 and 21 February 2024

## Outcome

Thomas Tallis School continues to be a good school.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils enjoy attending this friendly, welcoming and caring school. They are given many opportunities to express their individuality within school. Leaders make sure that pupils are supported well through exceptional pastoral care. This helps pupils to keep happy and safe. The school's vision to help pupils to understand the world and change it for the better is promoted consistently by staff.

The school has high expectations of all pupils. The many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported in their learning and wider development. The curriculum is broad, ambitious and creative. In the younger years, pupils can study Latin or complete an academic project qualification. At GCSE, pupils can study a wide range of courses, including further mathematics or astronomy.

Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to the school. They can join one of the many clubs, including coding, the jazz band or become earth ambassadors. Sixth-form students manage the lecture society. During tutor time, pupils learn about important themes, such as how to change and look after the world. Parents and carers are exceptionally positive about the school. Many praised the school's ethos.

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

The school's recent work on the curriculum is starting to lead to improvements for pupils, although previously published outcomes are still low. Subject leaders have thought carefully about their areas of responsibility. They carefully take into account what content pupils should be taught and when. The school identifies the important knowledge and ways of thinking that pupils should learn as part of 'Tallis Threshold Concepts'. For example, in history, pupils learn that time is a construct and 'does not organise itself'. In physical education, pupils learn that 'the game begins long before the game begins'.

The school has identified the powerful knowledge and vocabulary it wants pupils to learn and the order in which they should learn them. For example, in English, pupils in Year 7

receive an introduction to 'literariness' through stories, such as 'The Odyssey' and 'The Iliad'. By Year 9, pupils learn about global English, studying 'Purple Hibiscus', and take a post-colonial approach to 'The Tempest'.

The school has thought carefully about the best way to teach the curriculum, which it calls 'Tallis Praxis'. Teachers are passionate subject experts. Their strong subject knowledge enables them to present subject content clearly to pupils, particularly in the sixth form. Teachers know their pupils well and adapt learning effectively to support pupils with SEND. However, the strong curriculum ambitions are not implemented securely on occasions. This means that sometimes pupils do not remember important subject content deeply.

The school supports pupils' reading in many ways. It uses well-thought-out approaches to help pupils to build their reading fluency and comprehension. This includes regular catch-up sessions for pupils who struggle with their reading. Older pupils lead reading groups for younger pupils. However, the extensive work to support those pupils in the earlier stages of reading is not fully embedded. This means that some pupils do not have secure reading skills, particularly in their phonics knowledge, to fully access the curriculum.

Pupils' attendance was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The school is working hard to ensure that students attend school more regularly. Staff support families where needed and are proactive in tackling pupil absence.

Pupils behave well in class and are polite and respectful around the school site. Lessons are not disrupted by poor behaviour. Working relationships between pupils and staff are strong. The school's support for pupils' mental health and well-being is highly effective.

Pupils receive high-quality guidance to support their future career choices, particularly in the sixth form. All pupils take part in three 'community days', which focus on social issues, British values and citizenship. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 receive training in first aid through the St John's Ambulance. Sixth-form students take part in 'The Great Debate' every year to develop their public speaking skills. Students of all ages take part in 'Tallis Jury Service' to comment on school priorities. They run year group co-ops and activist groups, which work on issues, such as gender equality and anti-racism.

Staff enjoy working at the school. They appreciate the school's 'ethical leadership' model and the many opportunities they are given for professional development. Staff receive great care from leaders for their workload and well-being. Governors know the school well, celebrate its strengths and are committed to its continuous improvement.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- On occasions, the school's curricular aims are not embedded securely. This limits pupils' recall of important content from their long-term memory. The school should ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to retrieve key knowledge and skills so that they build on their prior learning effectively.
- The school's extensive work to support pupils in the earlier stages of reading is not yet fully embedded. This means that some pupils who struggle with their reading, especially in phonics, cannot access the curriculum fully. The school must ensure that it supports pupils who struggle with their reading and phonics precisely so that pupils can access the curriculum effectively.

## Background

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

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2018.

## 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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years,

looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	100190
<b>Local authority</b>	Greenwich
<b>Inspection number</b>	10313878
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	2,101
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	735
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Emma Warren and Catherine Farrant (Co-chairs)
<b>Headteacher</b>	Carolyn Roberts
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thomastallisschool.com">www.thomastallisschool.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	5 November 2020, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average comprehensive school with a very large sixth form.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has two additional resourced provisions. One is for up to 24 pupils with autism and language impairment. It also runs an additional resourced provision for up to 23 deaf pupils.
- The school makes use of four registered alternative provisions for a small number of pupils. The school also operates an in-house alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with members of the school senior leadership team, a selection of subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, English, geography and art. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of their work. Inspectors also considered the curriculum in some other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with those responsible for governance, including the co-chairs of the governing body.
- The views of pupils, parents and staff were considered through discussions and looking at information collected from Ofsted's online surveys.

## Inspection team

Christian Hicks, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Olivia Page

Ofsted Inspector

Gareth Cross

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