

Inspection of Thorns Collegiate Academy

Stockwell Avenue, Quarry Bank, Brierley Hill, West Midlands DY5 2NU

Inspection dates: 12 to 13 March 2024

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Good

Previous inspection grade

Inadequate

The acting principal of this school is Nikki Jones. This school is part of Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sir Mark Grundy, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Andy Dennis.

What is it like to attend this school?

As Thorns Collegiate Academy has improved, more pupils are rising to the challenges set by leaders and staff and are increasingly proud of their school. Many pupils are happy at school. Staff care about pupils' well-being and safety. They want the best for all pupils and set high standards for them.

Many pupils are involved in wider school life, for instance helping to organise the Christmas fair, participating in 'Thorns got talent' and making 'random acts of kindness' in the local community. Staff run an increasingly diverse range of clubs and many pupils actively take part. Pupils are also encouraged to be leaders in their school, from running the 'patchwork alliance' that promotes diversity and equality to being 'maths ambassadors'.

The school has done much to develop a culture that celebrates success, reinforces high standards and is truly inclusive. Pupils are increasingly signing up to this ethos. They attend well. The school is uncompromising in its insistence that pupils are in school and are ready to learn. Most pupils behave well and work hard. However, some older pupils do not, to the frustration of others. This behaviour, combined with some variability in pupils' learning in the classroom, stops some pupils from doing as well as they could.

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

Leaders, supported by the trust, are unrelenting in their desire to improve the school. They are taking the right steps, in the right order, at the right time. Staff are committed to the school. They contribute to help make the school a better place. All staff participate in 'change groups' to share their ideas and thoughts. Everyone is 'in it together' for the benefit of pupils.

Pupils learn a broad, balanced and innovative curriculum. Pupils in key stage 3 draw on and connect their learning across subjects through the 'literacy for life' curriculum. This helps pupils see how, for instance, learning in science supports their learning in geography. At key stage 4, pupils select from a broad range of options. This includes a range of qualifications that prepare them for their next steps.

In many subjects, the school's well-designed curriculum is not reflected in pupils' outcomes. This is particularly the case for disadvantaged pupils. There is too much variability in the quality of the curriculum delivery and a lack of focus on all disadvantaged pupils. Some teachers do not check routinely that pupils have secured the important knowledge they need or address pupils' misconceptions as they emerge. This has been compounded by the recruitment challenge the school has faced. Where staff deliver the curriculum well, such as in English, pupils excel.

Leaders are clear that there remains much to do to build on the positive improvements they have made to pupils' behaviour and attitudes. Some older pupils are still negative about their school and push against the school's efforts. This is

evident in the poor behaviour and language used by some pupils. The school does not tolerate this. Staff challenge appropriately and use the new system of 'rule reminders' consistently in lessons. However, the impact of the poor behaviour of some pupils is still too widespread. This behaviour is very much linked to pupils' previous experience of the school. They have not bought into the increasingly positive culture that staff are creating. Additionally, support for these pupils is not working well enough. When pupils are removed from lessons, they are not always helped to keep up with their studies or supported to improve their behaviour.

The school identifies and supports pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Up to date and accurate information is shared with teachers so they know how to best support each pupil. Teaching staff then work closely with support staff to make sure that pupils with SEND learn well. Parents and carers have seen the impact of this support. One parent summed up the views of others, simply stating that 'The SEND support is brilliant and inclusion team are always quick to respond.'

Pupils that need support with their reading get the help they need. Trained staff deliver this support in a timely and effective way. More widely, the school encourages all pupils to read. They have regular reading sessions in lessons and a variety of challenging texts have been woven through the curriculum.

Pupils benefit from a well-planned personal, health and social education curriculum. This includes an effective careers education element. Pupils learn this through their lessons, assemblies, 'focus-days' and tutor times. These reflect the local issues that pose a risk to pupils and gives them the knowledge they need to make good decisions. Teachers check that pupils know and remember this information.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has not fully created a culture where all pupils share the important values and beliefs that underpin school life. As a result, some pupils struggle to show respect and behave appropriately during the school day. The school should ensure that it develops a culture where all pupils share a set of common values that place mutual respect and high standards of behaviour at its core.
- The school has not ensured that pupils who find it difficult to behave get the support they need so that they can continue to learn the curriculum and improve their behaviour. As a result, these pupils do not keep up with their learning and are not always helped to learn from their mistakes so that they behave well. The school should ensure that when pupils are removed from lessons, they get

effective support so that they learn how to behave appropriately, and they keep up with their learning.

- The school has not ensured that the curriculum is implemented well in all aspects of pupils' learning. In too many classrooms, teachers do not check that pupils understand and remember the important knowledge they need, or quickly address pupils' misconceptions as they emerge. This means that in some subjects pupils do not learn the intended curriculum sufficiently well. The school should ensure that all staff consistently check pupils' knowledge and understanding across all subjects so that all pupils make the progress they should and achieve the best possible outcomes.
- The school's strategic plan to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils learn well and develop as young adults is in the early stages of implementation. As a result, the school is not currently addressing the additional barriers faced by all disadvantaged pupils. The school should ensure that it is supporting all disadvantaged pupils in all facets of their education so that they achieve well and successfully take their next steps in education, employment or training.

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

Unique reference number	143818
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10267300
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	947
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andy Dennis
Principal	Nicola Jones
Website	www.thornsca.org.uk
Dates of previous inspection	13 and 14 June 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school is part of the Shireland Collegiate Academy Trust.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers.
- 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.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We deemed the inspection a graded (section 5) inspection under the same Act.

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, His Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

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 carried out deep dives in these subjects: science, mathematics, modern foreign languages, design and technology and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also discussed the 'literacy for learning' curriculum and visited lessons when this was being taught.
- Inspectors held discussions with the acting principal and other senior and middle leaders, including the SEND coordinator.
- Inspectors spoke with members of the local governing body, trust executive staff and the chief executive officer.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's extra-curricular activities, enrichment programme and personal development programme with leaders.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. They took account of responses to a staff survey and Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance, behaviour, bullying and safeguarding.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, 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.

Ian Tustian, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Patrick Amieli

Ofsted Inspector

Ed Leighton

Ofsted Inspector

Neil Warner

Ofsted Inspector

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