

Inspection of Thomas Deacon Academy

Queen's Gardens, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire PE1 2UW

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 November 2024

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Sixth-form provision **Good**

Previous inspection grade Good

The principal of this school is Emily Gaunt. This school is part of Thomas Deacon Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Scott Hudson, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mark Potter.

What is it like to attend this school?

At Thomas Deacon Academy, pupils benefit from a welcoming environment where diversity is celebrated. Across all years, pupils learn about different views and beliefs. They enjoy celebrating each other's differences. During culture days, they attend school in cultural dress. They enjoy participating in cultural activities, including trying food from different countries and a range of traditional dancing. Pupils have the knowledge and confidence to discuss different viewpoints sensitively. They demonstrate a high level of understanding and respect towards others.

Across all years, the school is ambitious for pupils. Pupils benefit from work that builds on what they know. This allows pupils to deepen their understanding of important concepts over time. Pupils are well supported to meet the demands of the curriculum. As a result, most pupils achieve well. They are well prepared for their next stage of education or employment.

In the main, pupils behave well. They have a clear understanding of the school expectations. Lunchtime, and movement between lessons, is calm and sensible. Pupils are safe. They are confident that adults would help them if they had any concerns. In lessons, pupils work well. Adults quickly address any disruptive behaviour. This means pupils can concentrate on their learning.

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

The school provides an ambitious curriculum that ensures pupils develop a strong foundation of knowledge and skills from Year 3 through to Year 13. In the junior school, pupils build a secure base of understanding. This is further deepened as they move into the senior school in Year 7.

In many areas, teachers are confident in delivering the curriculum effectively. They possess strong subject knowledge, including in the sixth form, and adapt their teaching to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This ensures all pupils are well supported. In the main, teachers are skilled at checking what pupils know and remember. They frequently use probing questions to deepen pupils' understanding and encourage thoughtful debate. They provide ample opportunities for pupils to apply their learning and hone their skills. For example, in English, pupils are taught essential writing techniques step by step. Once these skills are secured, pupils produce high-quality extended pieces of writing. As a result, pupils make strong progress through the intended curriculum.

At times, the delivery of the curriculum does not always meet the school's high expectations. Teachers do not consistently check whether pupils have fully understood the material. Consequently, the tasks set for pupils do not always build effectively on their prior knowledge. As a result, some pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The school has prioritised reading. Pupils at the earliest stages of learning to read are accurately identified. They receive the help they need to quickly develop the skills they need to become fluent readers.

The school has high expectations of how pupils should conduct themselves. Staff ensure that pupils understand and meet the standards expected of them. This means pupils focus well on their work with very little distraction from their peers.

However, the number of pupils receiving suspensions, including repeat suspensions, remains high. While suspensions are often used appropriately, the school does not always evaluate their effectiveness well enough. Strategies to address pupils' academic or emotional needs are not always effective. Although pupils receive support following reintegration, it is not always tailored to their individual needs. As a result, some pupils, including those who are vulnerable or have SEND, need more effective support to engage fully with school.

Pupils, including in the sixth form, benefit from a rich personal development programme. The school emphasises character building through its character curriculum, which promotes the six C's: commitment, compassion, courtesy, curiosity, confidence, and courage. These values are brought to life through activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the Combined Cadet Force, as well as clubs, such as sports, cooking, and board games. Many pupils support the local community, for example, through volunteering at a local soup kitchen. Pupils value the careers advice they receive. They are well equipped to make informed decisions about their future.

Leaders, including those responsible for governance, have effective systems in place to evaluate the school's performance. Staff feel well supported in their roles. The school recognises the need to strengthen communication with parents. Some parents would appreciate more opportunities to share their views and engage with the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of teachers are not sufficiently well trained to use assessment in the most effective manner. As a result, some pupils do not benefit from lessons that are well designed to build on their prior learning. The school needs to ensure all staff consistently receive high-quality training, so they have the skills to deliver lessons that help pupils to achieve well.
- The school does not thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of its use of suspensions. Consequently, some pupils experience repeated suspensions without the desired

improvement in their behaviour. The school should identify any underlying academic or emotional factors contributing to pupils' behaviour. They should then provide targeted support to help pupils manage their behaviour and engage positively with school life.

- The school's systems for communicating with parents are not robust enough to ensure all families feel confident in engaging effectively with the school. As a result, some parents are unsure about how to share their views. The school should enhance its communication strategies to provide families with clear and accessible opportunities to express their perspectives.

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	135263
Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	10345291
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	2308
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	310
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mark Potter
CEO of the trust	Scott Hudson
Principal	Emily Gaunt
Website	www.thomasdeaconacademy.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	18 and 19 September 2019 under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- 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 currently uses one registered and one unregistered alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation 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: mathematics, science, English, art, religious studies 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 met with trust staff, including the CEO, the executive leader and the trust director of standards and improvement. They also met with the principal, and senior staff, including those with responsibility for pupils with SEND and responsibility for the sixth form.
- The lead inspector met with the chair of trustees and the chair of the academy committee.
- Inspectors scrutinised documents relating to school improvement and governance, behaviour and attendance, alternative provision, the personal, social and health education curriculum, and pupils with SEND. They also held meetings with staff with responsibilities in these areas.
- Inspectors reviewed Ofsted's staff survey, parent survey and pupil survey. They also spoke to groups of pupils, including single-sex groups.
- 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.

Inspection team

Bessie Owen, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Tessa Holledge	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Mellors	His Majesty's Inspector
Wayne Jarvis	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Leonard	Ofsted Inspector

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