

# Inspection of Thurstable School Sports College and Sixth Form Centre

Maypole Road, Tiptree, Colchester, Essex CO5 0EW

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Inspection dates:	20 and 21 May 2025
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Sixth-form provision	<b>Good</b>
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The headteacher of this school is James Ketley. This school is a single-academy trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Neal Phillips.

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

Pupils learn, and increasingly achieve well at Thurstable School. They benefit from a well-taught, ambitious curriculum. Pupils meet a wide range of employers, education and training providers. Consequently, pupils are effectively prepared for their next steps.

The school prioritises the development of pupils' character. They have opportunities to develop their leadership skills through the active school council. Pupils become informed and active citizens, learning about democracy and social issues. They broaden their interests when they attend a raft of clubs, from forensics to creative writing and cheerleading. The school offers a wide range of trips, visits and workshops.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Pupils understand these and most meet them. Pupils usually treat each other with kindness and respect. The majority of pupils strive to achieve highly and attend well. If pupils need support to focus on their learning, caring staff provide the help they require. The 'Endeavour centre' provides very effective support for pupils who find it hard to come to school. This helps them improve their confidence and resilience. Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They know effective strategies to look after their well-being.

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

The school has significantly improved the curriculum and the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Published outcomes at GCSE and, particularly, at A-level, do not reflect the current quality of provision. The curriculum is broad and ambitious for all pupils. Staff have thought carefully about the important knowledge that pupils need, and the order in which they should learn it. Consequently, pupils build securely on what they have learned. Teaching involves regular recap tasks to help pupils recall important facts and knowledge. This helps pupils remember what they have been taught.

Teachers deliver the curriculum consistently well in all key stages, using the school's 'habits for excellence'. They use their strong subject knowledge to introduce new learning clearly. Teachers check how well pupils have learned this content. They use these checks well to adjust the curriculum, to close any gaps and to correct any misunderstandings. The school identifies and meets the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) well. Teachers develop and adapt lessons skilfully to ensure that all pupils can access the curriculum. Pupils have structured opportunities to 'turn and talk' about their learning. At times, pupils do not get enough opportunities to practice and to apply what they have learned. When this happens, they do not acquire the depth of knowledge and understanding that they should.

The school promotes the importance of reading. Pupils develop their literacy and oracy effectively across the curriculum and in form time sessions. If pupils need additional support with their reading, staff provide them with the precise support they need. This helps pupils develop their fluency and accuracy so they can access the curriculum.

Pupils' behaviour at school has improved since the previous inspection. They focus on their learning and strive to do their best. When teaching is particularly effective, pupils are highly engaged. Some groups of pupils do not attend well enough. A minority of pupils do not have as positive attitudes to their learning as their peers. At times, this can interrupt the learning of others. The school is working increasingly effectively to engage these pupils in their learning so that they attend and achieve well.

Pupils understand the importance of diversity and equality. They learn about a range of faiths and cultures. They understand the importance of democracy and tolerance. If pupils do not treat others with sufficient respect, the school takes prompt and robust action to make this stop. Pupils learn about the importance of consent and how to stay safe online. Students in the sixth form learn about personal finance and how to apply for apprenticeships and higher education.

Leaders have steered the school very effectively through many significant challenges. At the same time, they have taken effective action to improve the quality of education, particularly for pupils with SEND. The school's leaders, including its governing body, rigorously check the quality and impact of its work. The school carefully considers improvements that could enhance pupils' learning, and how these should be implemented. Staff at all levels are determined for all pupils to achieve highly and be fully prepared for adulthood. Staff receive high quality coaching and training. They benefit from and appreciate the considerable support for their well-being and workload. This professional development and support equips members of staff to carry out their work and teach the curriculum increasingly well.

## **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 ensured that all pupils engage fully with their learning. As a result, some pupils do not display positive attitudes to learning or attend school well enough. The school should ensure that it builds on its work to ensure pupils consistently place a high value on their education so that they can achieve well.
- The school has not ensured that pupils have sufficient high-quality opportunities to practice and apply what they have learned. When this happens, some pupils do not gain the depth of knowledge and understanding that they need to achieve highly. The school should provide staff with the support they need to provide these opportunities for pupils.

## 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>	137241
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10378507
<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18
<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>	1031
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	47
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Neal Phillips
<b>Headteacher</b>	James Ketley
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.thurstable.co.uk">www.thurstable.co.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	2 May 2024, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school experienced significant disruption from September 2023 due to the presence of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) on site. In the first term of that academic year, pupils did a mixture of face-to-face and online learning due to building work on-site.
- The school's sixth form is closing at the end of this academic year.
- 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 two registered and four unregistered alternative provisions for pupils.

## 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 (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 continuing impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The lead inspector spoke to the chief executive officer of the trust, senior trust leaders, trustees and members of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, languages, history and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, 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 curriculum in some other subjects and visited a range of lessons.
- 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 held meetings with a range of leaders including the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of records relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke with several groups of pupils and observed their behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the responses and free-text comments received during the inspection to Ofsted Parent View. They took account of responses to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.

## Inspection team

Steve Woodley, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steven Hogan	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Shapland	Ofsted Inspector

Vicki Webber

Ofsted Inspector

Polly Lankester

Ofsted Inspector

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