

INSPECTION REPORT

THOMAS TELFORD SCHOOL

Telford, Shropshire

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123627

Headteacher: Mr K Satchwell

Reporting inspector: Mrs Val Lynch
1475

Dates of inspection: 23rd – 25th January 2001

Inspection number: 185721

Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: City Technology College

School category: Independent

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Old Park
Telford
Shropshire

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Telephone number: 01952 200000

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Michael Wakeford

Date of previous inspection: October 1995

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Thomas Telford School is an 11-18 city technology college in the town of Telford. It provides education for pupils and students from Telford and Wolverhampton, as part of its agreement with the Department for Education and Employment. The school is very popular with parents and has grown since the previous inspection and is larger than other secondary schools.

There is a requirement that pupils joining the school should represent the full range of ability. Results of tests, taken when they were 11, for the current Years 9 to 11 and the Year 11 who left last year, show that the attainment of these pupils at the start of Year 7 was in line with the national average.

The school has a small percentage of minority ethnic pupils and a very small number of pupils who have English as an additional language. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly in line with the national average for all secondary schools. There are only four pupils who have a statement of special educational need. This figure and the percentage of pupils on the special educational needs register is well below the national average. The school removes pupils from the special educational needs register in Key Stage 4 when their needs are fully met within their lessons.

The school is designated a Beacon School¹. It has the Sportsmark Gold Award with distinction, one of only six schools to do so. As part of its drive for quality in all that it does it has received the Charter Mark, Investors in People accreditation and Investors in Careers accreditation.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Thomas Telford school is an excellent school. The standard of pupils' work is very high. Teaching is of the highest quality and all that the school does is designed to help pupils make the most of their opportunities. The leadership of the headteacher is exceptional. He has created a school where teachers, pupils and students share a love of learning and where pupils and students strive to do their best. The school provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership.
- Achievement and the best teaching and learning are the focus of everything the school does.
- Excellent use of computers helps teachers to teach and pupils and students to learn.
- Innovation and imagination maintain improvements in all aspects of school life.
- A wide range of activities help pupils and students, whatever their talents, to succeed.
- The school maintains and develops excellent relationships with parents and carers.

What could be improved

- There are no aspects that require significant improvement.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made excellent progress since the previous inspection on all key issues. Test and examination results have improved steadily to exceptionally high standards in both key stages and in the sixth form. The library has been re-located and satellite libraries and three independent learning centres now provide more space for students to work. Electronic whiteboards are used in all subject areas and the whole curriculum is available on the school's web site. Year on year investment in textbooks keeps the school abreast with syllabus changes. The school ensures that the spiritual development of pupils is provided within their lessons. Religious education has been introduced in Key Stage 4 and covers what is required by the agreed syllabus. Religious education is taught in the

¹ A Beacon School is a school that has been recognised as having particular good practice by the Department for Education and Employment. Beacon Schools receive a small amount of additional funding so that they can share their good practice with other schools.

sixth form through issues raised in subjects, although more could be done. Data protection registration has been completed. In 1998 the school was named in the annual report from Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools as an outstanding school, in recognition of the improvements made.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16 and 18 year olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with				Key
	all schools			similar schools	
	1998	1999	2000	2000	
Key Stage 3	A	A	A	A*	Very high A*
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A*	well above average A
A-level/AS-levels	C	A	A		above average B
					average C
					below average D
					well below average E

Standards achieved by the age of 14 and in the sixth form are well above average. GCSE examination results and GNVQ results are very high, putting the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. When compared with similar schools, on the basis of the percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals, results are very high at age 14 and at age 16. By the age of 16, standards achieved in all subjects are well above average. Results in the national tests at age 14 have improved in line with improvements nationally. GCSE results have improved at a faster rate than they have nationally. Results in the sixth form have improved as more pupils who have been at the school since they were 11 continue into the sixth form. Boys and girls do equally well in test and examinations because boys' attainment is very much better than the attainment of boys nationally.

The school sets itself very challenging targets based on year on year improvement, and achieves them. Having achieved 100 per cent five or more GCSE grades A*-C it is now looking to improve the percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades.

Standards of work seen reflect the very high examination results. The quality of written work in all key stages is well above average. Standards in reading are very good. Speaking and listening skills are also very good. The quality of work in English, mathematics and science was consistently high. High quality work was also seen in lessons in all other subjects. From average levels of attainment at age 11 pupils and students achieve very well to reach such high standards.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' and students' attitudes to school are exceptional. They show a great enthusiasm for school and the activities the school provides.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is excellent throughout the school and pupils and students are always polite and courteous.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' and students' personal development is outstanding. They have very good relationships with each other and become mature and confident young people as they grow older.
Attendance	Attendance is very good because pupils and students enjoy school and do not like to be away.

Because pupils and students are so enthusiastic and because relationships are so very good there is a very purposeful atmosphere in the school. Pupils enjoy learning and appreciate and celebrate their

achievements and the achievements of others. Very good attendance is maintained throughout the school, which means that pupils and students have the best chance of success in public tests and examinations.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Excellent

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Teaching was good in every lesson. It was very good or better in seven out of 10 lessons and was excellent in nearly four out of 10. In English, mathematics and science a number of different teachers were seen teaching. In two thirds of the lessons in these subjects teaching was very good or better. Teachers' subject expertise and their ability to plan to a very high standard ensure that pupils of all abilities learn and make very good progress in every subject. Many teachers are at the leading edge of developments in the use of information and communication technology and there is no doubt that this enhances pupils' and students' experiences in lessons and in other activities. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught effectively in English and mathematics respectively and are developed and used in all other subjects. In a very few lessons pupils were not always given enough time and opportunities to work in groups, think for themselves or to reflect on their ideas.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Excellent: the curriculum is carefully planned to enable all pupils and students to fulfil their potential whatever their particular interest or talent.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent: pupils and students experience the full range of opportunities available to everyone else and have their needs met by very skilful teaching.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Excellent: the pupils concerned are bi-lingual and, therefore, participate in all aspects of life at the school. The school provides accreditation for their home language when this is possible.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: teachers and other adults create a lively and challenging range of opportunities that make pupils curious, thoughtful and sensitive to the needs of others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellent: the quality of care for individual pupils and students is outstanding both in terms of personal and academic support.

The school provides all pupils with a wide range of opportunities and responds to the needs of individual pupils as best as it can in all key stages. The school makes exceptional provision for what in most schools would be called extra-curricular activities by extending the school day to provide for a full range of activities including sports, music and performing arts. This time is also used for further study two nights a week for pupils in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. In Key Stage 4 and sixth form equal importance is attached to academic and vocational courses and pupils of all levels of ability can choose either. All pupils do an intermediate GNVQ in information technology in Key Stage 4. Links and direct support for schools locally and further afield are well developed with an extensive and impressive range of projects. Links with industry are very good.

Each pupil or student has a personal tutor who checks their progress in all subjects at least once a month. Reports, that include a comment from the pupil or student and targets for improvement, are

then issued to parents. The personal tutor and subject teachers are all willing to help pupils and students before minor difficulties become major concerns.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent: the leadership of the school at all levels is focused on ensuring high quality in all that the school does. The headteacher is the driving force for this, ably supported by a very strong and dedicated team of deputies and teachers in charge of subjects.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body carefully and conscientiously fulfils all its statutory responsibilities and its responsibilities from the funding arrangements with the Department for Education and Employment.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent: because the school is achieving such high results it has developed its own systems for making judgements about whether it has done as well as it can and how it can improve.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent: rigorous and thoughtful financial planning and monitoring ensure that all resources are appropriately used.

The school is very effectively led and managed by a group of very knowledgeable and skilful governors and an outstanding headteacher. The headteacher is steadfast in what he believes the school should provide and is inspirational in his leadership. The school also benefits from having a very conscientious, hardworking and professional team of people who all work together to provide the best for pupils and students. The headteacher, governors and staff have been committed to developing new ideas and finding new ways of working. They have seen their ideas and initiatives through to the point when they can say that they have been very successful. The school applies the principles of best value in all that it does.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Pupils and students make good progress. • Behaviour is good. • Teaching is good. • They are kept well informed on their children's progress. • The school responds to questions or problems. • The school is well managed and led. • Pupils and students are helped to become mature and responsible. 	

The inspection team had 519 responses to the parents' questionnaire and 119 parents attended the meeting with the registered inspector. Parents are delighted with all aspects of work of the school and are pleased and proud that their children have the opportunity to learn in such an exceptional environment. The inspection team can understand these views because the school provides what parents want and they in turn support their children and the school. Although a few individual parents made some observations based on their personal experience, all parents were very satisfied with all that the school does. The only point made by a small number of parents was that they find it difficult when, because there is no preference for siblings in the admissions policy, their second son or daughter does not get into the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership

- 1 The school is very effectively led and managed by a group of very knowledgeable and skilful governors and an outstanding headteacher who is steadfast in what he believes the school should provide and is inspirational in his leadership.
- 2 The headteacher has made a significant contribution to the development of the school since it opened in 1991. He values everyone's work equally and is keen to recognise and reward success. He has built a very strong team of people who put pupils' and students' needs at the forefront of all that they do. In return people who work in the school, parents and pupils and students show an exceptional commitment to the school. There is a very corporate atmosphere and a self-confidence that comes from success.
- 3 When the school opened, its brief was to be innovative in the way it did things. In the management of the school this is reflected in a very non-hierarchical structure. The headteacher is assisted by nine deputy heads who, as well as having responsibilities for whole school matters, are also responsible for subject areas. This means that there is very good communication between the senior management team and all teachers. The minutes of senior management team meetings indicate just how much is known by the senior management team. They discuss subject specific issues, but also share the information they have on individual pupils and students. This level of detail ensures that any decisions are based on very detailed knowledge about exactly what is happening in the school.
- 4 The deputy heads are given responsibilities and the freedom to make decisions. They know that they are accountable for work in their subject areas and for their other areas of responsibility. They are all talented managers, exceptionally efficient and make a very effective team. There is also consistently high quality management within all subjects. Because of the way the school is managed there is great consistency and agreement about what needs to be done and how. A good example of this is the breaking down of all subjects into four-week modules with reports to parents at the end of each module. This is a whole school scheme and every subject teacher and personal tutor does what they need to do to make the scheme work within a very short time scale.
- 5 There are many new ways of working in the school. Many are very successful and one reason for this is that the headteacher believes in giving time to see if ideas are working. He will change things if they are not successful. For example, swipe card registration was abandoned because too much time was spent looking for lost cards. He is very keen to hear the views of colleagues, parents and pupils and students. Rather than have a formal school council, he meets regularly with the head boy and the head girl and every month has lunch with a group of approximately 12 pupils and students. Pupils and students think that this is a good way for the headteacher to get to know what they think about different aspects of school life. Pupils expressed concern at one of these meetings about the size of the changing accommodation for physical education. This was explored and very quickly it was agreed that new accommodation was needed. The headteacher's approach is that if there is a problem we can find a solution and "all things are possible". It is this self-belief that he has been able to convey to all staff and more importantly to pupils and students.

- 6 The school's aims are strongly reflected in its practice. Relationships between all members of the school community are excellent and particularly so between adults and pupils and students. Pupils and students spoke very highly of all staff in the school. They agreed that staff treat young people as adults and are always prepared to do their best to help pupils and students to be successful. Pupils' attitudes to school are exceptional. They show a great enthusiasm for school life and the activities the school provides. They feel part of a community in which all are valued equally for what they bring as individuals. This is the atmosphere that the headteacher has worked hard to create.
- 7 The school sets challenging targets in a number of areas. As well as targets for examinations results there are targets for attendance and punctuality, for staying-on rates into the sixth form and for the size of classes. What is impressive about these targets is that they generate a "can do" way of thinking. The school seeks accreditation for its work through such schemes as Investors in People and Charter Mark. Its success has been recognised both locally and nationally. This has generated a sense of pride amongst parents, teachers, staff and pupils and students.
- 8 The headteacher has set very high expectations for himself, colleagues, pupils and students and parents. All try to live up to his expectations and to the expectations they have for themselves. All are successful and a large number of photographs and certificates around the school are testimony to this success.

Achievement and the best teaching and learning are the focus of everything the school does

- 9 The whole way the school is managed and organised is designed to make sure that pupils and students achieve. Ensuring that teachers have all they need to teach and pupils and students have the best possible conditions in which to learn is key to securing this achievement.
- 10 Standards achieved by the age of 14 and in the sixth form are well above average and have continuously improved over the last five years. GCSE examination results and GNVQ results are very high, putting the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. Standards of work seen during the inspection reflect the very high examination results. The quality of written work in all key stages is well above average. Standards in reading are very good. Speaking and listening skills are also very good. The quality of work seen in English, mathematics and science was consistently high and this was reflected in the lessons seen in other subjects. This high level of success represents a considerable achievement for the young people involved, their parents and their teachers.
- 11 The school takes every opportunity to celebrate achievement. There are pictures and certificates on the walls reflecting the pride that the school has in what it does and in the individuals that make up the school community. Teachers take every opportunity to celebrate pupils' and students' successes of all kinds and take great pleasure in seeing what they can achieve. Individual pupils and students, teachers, subject areas, the headteacher and the school have targets that are set on the basis of year on year improvement.
- 12 Whilst this atmosphere comes from the whole school community working together, it is the high quality of teaching and learning that leads to this success. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subjects and an ability to plan thoroughly in subject teams. Before the summer term ends the work for the following year is completely planned and resources and timetables are ready for a prompt start to the autumn

term. This ensures that pupils learn in every lesson. Many teachers are at the leading edge of developments in the use of information and communication technology and there is no doubt that this enhances pupils' and students' experiences in lessons and in other activities.

- 13 Teachers manage pupils and students very well and channel their enthusiasm for learning so that they make good use of their time in briskly paced lessons. The school ensures that teachers have the equipment they need to teach and in many lessons teachers make excellent use of electronic whiteboards to support their teaching. In a French lesson the teacher was proud of how she had developed her skills to the level where she could include animation in her presentations. This captured pupils' attention and they appreciated the effort the teacher had made.
- 14 All lessons have good pace to them because teachers change activities and are always alert to pupils who might finish their work before others. In a very few lessons, for example in humanities, this sense of wanting to get on with what has to be covered made it difficult for pupils and students to have enough time and opportunities to work in groups, think for themselves and to reflect deeply on their ideas.
- 15 The way the school is staffed provides enough time for teachers to plan and mark pupils' and students' work. Because of this, marking is of the highest quality and often includes very clear and lengthy comments about what the pupil or student needs to do to improve. It is recognised within the school that if staff are absent it is better for pupils and students if other regular teachers cover those absent colleagues lessons. This is built into staff conditions of service and payment is made for this. The school also makes sure that it has the right people doing the right jobs and avoids teachers doing tasks that others are better qualified to do. The person responsible for careers education and guidance is a retired human resource manager and has a wealth of experience to offer to pupils, students and their parents that a teacher could not possibly have.
- 16 Most subjects have one three-hour lesson a week, with the exception of modern foreign languages and physical education. These two subjects have three hours a week divided into two lessons a week, each lasting one and a half hours. Because teaching is so good teachers are skilful in their planning for these longer lessons and make the most of that learning time by providing a variety of activities. For pupils there are some days when they only have two subjects and they can really get involved in the work in those subjects. Similarly for teachers, there are days when they only teach two classes, which is less demanding in both preparation time and in teaching.
- 17 The school recognises that teachers and pupils need breaks and these occur once within the three-hour lessons. However, they are not long and, therefore, do not interrupt the learning. The way the breaks are organised is very good. They are staggered so that the whole school is never on the move at the same time. Queuing is kept to an absolute minimum and, therefore, there are very few opportunities for pupils to be distracted from the business of learning.
- 18 The school has long been committed to developing students' independent learning skills and having established this as a way of working in the sixth form it has extended it to Key Stage 4. Using teachers' and technicians' time to put the curriculum on the school's web site is yet another example of an initiative that is totally about improving teaching and learning in order to raise standards. This accessibility of the curriculum on the web site means that other schools can benefit

from the high quality curriculum planning that has taken place. It also provides other schools with the opportunity to develop independent learning with their own pupils and students.

- 19 School begins at 8.30 a.m. and finishes at 4.00 p.m. with the additional session until 5.40 p.m. Throughout the day pupils and students, teachers and all staff work together to ensure that the best use is made of the time available for learning.

Excellent use of computers helps teachers to teach and pupils and students to learn

- 20 The school makes the very best use of information and communication technology for teaching, learning and management. Daily information is conveyed on a screen in the communal restaurant. The daily broadcast on the thought for the week is broadcast on television screens in all classrooms. Information on individual pupils and students is easily accessible to all teachers on the computer network. However, there are three particular aspects of the school that are worth highlighting because of their impact on pupils' and students' learning.
- 21 Electronic whiteboards are gradually being introduced into all classrooms. This is only after the headteacher and governors were convinced that they were going to make a difference. These whiteboards enable staff to access extracts from the on-line curriculum and to add their own teaching points to pre-prepared materials. They also enable staff to present information and ideas to pupils in a very professional and high quality manner.
- 22 The on-line curriculum was designed to allow pupils and students to learn independent of a teacher. Year 7 pupils are gradually introduced to it and are encouraged to use it to identify extension tasks. By Year 9 pupils are being encouraged to use it for research and investigations by accessing other websites on the Internet. Homework tasks are listed as are extension tasks for pupils and students to do when they have finished work that was set. Initially the focus was on providing independent learning opportunities for the sixth form, but it has proved to be so successful that it is being extended all the time. Courses that are complete are being made available to other schools as part of the commitment to share successful practice with other schools.
- 23 The design and technology department is at the leading edge of using computers to assist the design process. However, pupils only use computers when they have learnt the basic skills. Two workshops are equipped with facilities for computer-aided design and computer aided manufacture. The software available for computer-aided design can produce animated virtual reality models. The software for computer aided manufacture allows the development of three-dimensional colour forms so that pupils can look at their models from all angles. It will produce tool paths and produce the designed models.
- 24 The inspection team believe that one of the reasons why boys do so well is because of the use of information and communication technology. All pupils have the opportunity to recognise the power and potential of information and communications technology by using it in their everyday lives at school and at home.

Innovation and imagination maintain improvement in all aspects of school life

- 25 The school describes itself as a school for the 21st century and the inspection team agree with this view. There are many aspects of the school that are different to what is found in the majority of other schools.

- Lessons are three hours long, but include a short break. As all subjects are so successful in GCSE examination on this time allocation, this is a very effective use of time.
- Teachers share their breaks with students and there is no staff room.
- All courses are planned by subject teams to be taught in 10 modules of four weeks. Parents receive 10 reports per year, but only meet with personal tutors or teachers if there is a specific need. Because boys especially prefer ways of working that involve short term tasks, this way of planning and teaching could be a reason why the boys at this school do so well.
- Many subject areas are open plan and although teachers have their own groups, pupils can work with other teachers if this is more appropriate for their needs.
- The school week is much longer than the recommended 25 hours and varies from 31 to 35 hours.
- The school year of 39 weeks is also longer.
- There is no study leave to prepare for examinations. Pupils and students are taught right up to the examination. This is because teachers plan the revision elements of the course as thoroughly as they plan all their lessons.
- Pupils and students are placed in tutor groups that cover the full age range. Older pupils and students often help younger pupils and become their friends.

26 In the early days of the school each pupil and student was issued with a laptop computer for use at home. This enabled them to use their laptops for word processing and designing spreadsheets and databases. However, in 1998 the school did a survey of parents and carers and found that eight out of 10 families had a computer. It recognised the potential of this for teaching if the curriculum was on the school's website and accessible through a password. This venture was not confined to one or two subjects. All subjects looked at their modular curriculum and identified what could be made available to pupils and students on-line.

27 The school has always been committed to providing vocational education for all pupils. In September 2000 Advanced GNVQs were changed to AVCEs, advanced vocational certificates of education. Staff in the school planned the whole year's course and were ready to start teaching the new courses at the start of the school year. There are very impressive arrangements for teaching hospitality and catering. The school has a kitchen and small restaurant area used by the course team to provide an environment close to that found in a hotel. When the school has visitors it is the pupils and students on the hospitality and catering courses who provide the refreshments. During the inspection the Year 11 pupils on the hospitality and catering course laid on a Burns' Night attended by friends of the school.

28 The school knows that it is fortunate in being able to organise itself and teach in the way that it does. As a city technology college and a Beacon school it is required to share its ideas and good practice with other schools. This it does very willingly. It has many links with other schools locally, nationally and internationally. It welcomes visitors but is also prepared to share its very good practice through its website and its curriculum through the Internet.

A wide range of activities help pupils and students, whatever their talents, to succeed

29 There is a wide range of excellent opportunities and experience available to pupils. These are a major factor in helping all pupils and students to fulfil their potential, whatever their particular strength or talents.

- 30 In Key Stage 3 pupils have the opportunity to study business education and French and German in addition to the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education. The business education course is a very creative way of providing pupils with an early understanding of the world of industry and commerce. It also provides a real context for careers education and guidance.
- 31 In Key Stage 4 all pupils follow courses in English, mathematics, science and business education which they can take to GCSE level. In addition all pupils take a full GNVQ intermediate certificate in information and communication technology. Success in a full GNVQ intermediate course is equivalent to four GCSEs. It is a credit to the staff in the school that all pupils on this course last year were successful. All the other subjects that were studied in Key Stage 3 are available as option choices along with GNVQs in hospitality and catering and leisure and tourism.
- 32 There are two aspects of the Key Stage 4 curriculum that make it different to that found in the majority of other schools. The first is the use of the time from 4 o'clock to 5.40 to provide additional teaching time so that pupils can study a greater range of subjects. This enables all pupils to study for a GNVQ in information and communication technology. The second is the availability of work on the school's web site. This means that in that 4 to 5.40 session pupils can study independently if they wish. In organising the curriculum in Key Stage 4 the school has made sure that every pupil has the opportunity to gain at least five GCSE grades A*-C and many pupils take the opportunity to take even more. Pupils appreciate being able to continue studying a wide range of subjects.
- 33 In the sixth form 17 subjects are offered at A-level. As in Key Stage 4 there are significant differences between what is offered at Thomas Telford and what is offered in the majority of other schools. Firstly, there are eight AVCEs for students to choose from and all students follow a course in information and communication technology. Secondly, sixth form students spend nearly a third of their week studying independently, using computers to access the work that they need to cover. This is exceptionally good preparation for further study at university. All sixth form students have very good independent learning skills and take full responsibility for organising their work.
- 34 In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, equal importance is attached to academic and vocational courses and pupils and students of all levels of ability can choose either. Work experience is also a strong feature of the Key Stage 4 and sixth form curriculum. At the end of Year 11 the school runs a post-examinations opportunities programme which involves a two-week work experience placement and ample opportunities for de-briefing. Because the programme runs after the examinations it ensures that teaching time before the examinations is not interrupted. In the sixth form students have the opportunity for up to four weeks' work placement with local or national companies or with companies in France or Germany where the school has link schools.
- 35 Any concerns about the pressure that the number of examination courses being followed or the length of the school day might put on pupils and students were dispelled during the inspection. Pupils and students thoroughly enjoy their learning, want to work hard, but know that there is always support and help available. Personal tutors and subject teachers are very sensitive to individual pupils needs and are always readily available to help

- 36 The school makes exceptional provision for what in most schools would be called extra-curricular activities by providing a full range of sports, music and performing arts activities during the 4 to 5.40 sessions. Many pupils and students take up these opportunities. On the Thursday of the inspection week a large number of pupils were involved in the music school that takes place on Tuesdays as well as Thursdays. All individual instrumental tuition takes place at this time alongside band, orchestra and choir practices. There is a full programme of fixtures against other schools and inter-house matches. Pupils and students from Year 10 upward can take the Duke of Edinburgh Award. What is impressive is the commitment of staff and pupils and students to these third sessions. Even where something isn't formally organised many staff, pupils and students just use the time to continue working, often together.
- 37 The school has a small number of pupils with special educational needs. Teachers know these pupils well and make good arrangements for them to be involved in all lessons and in all aspects of the life of the school. In Key Stage 4 the only pupils on the special educational needs register are those pupils with statements. This is because the school works very hard with these pupils in Key Stage 3 to overcome their learning difficulties. In Key Stage 4 they ensure that the curriculum meets pupils' needs and, therefore, no additional support is required. The school also works with the local education authority to provide a small number of places to pupils excluded from other schools. What is impressive about the way the school works with these young people is that it is totally focused on getting them into lessons, learning and achieving.
- 38 At the time of the previous inspection there were concerns about the provision for religious education in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form and about pupils' spiritual development. There is time for religious education in Year 10 and in that time the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are met. There is no specifically identified time in the sixth form, but aspects of what would be an appropriate sixth form course are covered in some other subjects. However, more opportunities could be made available for all students in the sixth form to participate in a more structured course.
- 39 The school is meticulous in ensuring that its commitment to teaching personal and social education and promoting pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education through subjects and experiences is met. The daily television broadcast, supporting the thought for the week, is a very good example of this. Pupils volunteer to present the broadcast and read an appropriate extract or contribute their own thoughts. Pupils and students in their personal tutor groups prepare themselves for the broadcast and listen thoughtfully and attentively.
- 40 Teachers and other adults in the school create a lively and challenging range of opportunities that make pupils curious, thoughtful and sensitive to the needs of others. Pupils' and students' enthusiasm for all that they do and the standards they achieve, for example, in their art work enriches life in the school. Pupils and students spoke about how much they enjoy their work and how much they appreciate what the school provides. Pupils and students have very good relationships with each other and become increasingly mature and confident young people.

The school maintains and develops excellent relationships with parents and carers

- 41 Parents and carers are delighted with all aspects of work of the school and are pleased and proud that their children have the opportunity to learn in such an exceptional environment. Comments from them indicate that the school is providing

exactly what they want for their children and, therefore, they support it and all that it does.

- 42 If parents and carers want their children to attend the school they must apply at the beginning of the final year in primary school. Following their application, children take a nationally recognised test so that the school can make sure that it takes children from the full ability range. In applying to the school, parents and carers accept that even if their child is very able they might not get a place. Reports are requested from primary schools so that the school can then identify children with an aptitude for science or technology or mathematics. Parents and carers are very involved in supporting their children through this application process. Before their children join the school they have to agree to the parents' charter. This is a particularly good document because it states very clearly what the school will provide for its pupils and how parents and carers can help their children. Its tone reflects a real partnership between home and school. This whole process, along with the many opportunities for parents and carers to visit the school, establishes that responsibility for children's learning is shared between teachers and parents and carers.
- 43 Parents and carers feel well informed about what is happening in the school. They are very knowledgeable about their children's progress because the school provides reports to them every three or four weeks. Comments from subject teachers are analysed by personal tutors and an overall statement written about progress. Pupils and students are also required to write a comment and to set targets for the next four weeks. When the report goes home parents and carers are asked to indicate whether they are satisfied with the work that their children are doing, both at home and at school. They are also given the opportunity to meet the personal tutor if they feel this would be helpful and they can see subject teachers if they, or the teachers, think this is necessary.
- 44 At the end of each year the school provides pupils and parents and carers with a bound record of achievement. Parents' and carers' comments in these were a delight to read. All expressed pleasure in what their children had achieved during the year. Teachers' comments were very informative and also praised pupils and students. Pupils and students we spoke to were proud of their records and appreciated how the school and their parents and carers work together. As part of the school's approach to celebrating achievements it also has a Parent of the Year Award.
- 45 Parents and carers are always welcome in the school. Because they are received so warmly and treated with respect they respond to invitations to work alongside teachers and to attend events organised to help them help their children. An evening organised to help parents understand how pupils and students can get work from the school web site was very well attended and much appreciated.
- 46 The personal tutor is a key person in the way the school cares for its pupils. Because the personal tutor, as far as possible, stays with the same group of pupils and students throughout their time at the school they build very good relationship with parents and carers. Parents and carers know that if any minor difficulties occur they will be contacted rapidly. They also know that if they contact the school the personal tutor will respond as soon as possible and certainly within 24 hours, even if it means a telephone call in the evening.
- 47 The governing body of the school does not have designated parent governors. This is because it is a city technology college and the governing body has different terms of reference to other maintained foundation or community schools. However, the

governing body has wisely co-opted two governors who are also parents. In addition to this arrangement to involve parents in the leadership and management of the school, the headteacher has established a parents' advisory group. The function of this group is to provide a forum for collecting parents' and carers' views on what is happening at the school or what is proposed for the future. Members of the group think that they are listened to and feel able to raise matters of concern. Parents and carers at the parents' meeting and in the parents' questionnaire appreciate the school seeking their views and know that their suggestions are discussed and in many cases acted upon.

- 48 The analysis of the responses to the questionnaire shows how much parents and carers value the work of the school. The only adverse comments, if they could be described as such, were related to admissions. The school's admissions policy, formed by agreement between the major sponsors and the Department for Education and Employment, does not provide for brothers and sisters to get a place automatically. Because the school is so good parents are always very disappointed if a second child does not get a place.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- 49 Although there are some minor improvements that can be made these are not significant enough to be identified separately.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 50 Because standards are so high and all that the school does is of the highest quality there are no key issues.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	47
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	33

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
38	35	27	0	0	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	844	309
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	86	26

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	4	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	44	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	7
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.9
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.4

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	86	81	167

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	84	84
	Girls	80	77	79
	Total	159	161	163
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	95 (99)	96 (93)	98 (95)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	74 (69)	86 (73)	77 (63)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	84	86
	Girls	79	78	78
	Total	158	162	164
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	95 (95)	97 (93)	98 (93)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	60 (57)	85 (71)	58 (55)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	2000	84	84	168

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	86	86	86
	Girls	84	85	85
	Total	170	171	171
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (99)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	79 (72)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	115	100
	National		N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	48	69	117

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	23.2	22.7	22.9 (22.5)	4.3	5.7	5.2 (5.0)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	54	100
	National		76.5

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	12
Black – African heritage	5
Black – other	8
Indian	14
Pakistani	19
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	3
White	1072
Any other minority ethnic group	19

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	3	3
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

This table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	76.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.1

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	581

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	59.3 ²
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	24
Key Stage 4	24
Key Stage 5	16

Financial information

Financial year	1999
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	£
Total income	3,784,248
Total expenditure	3,448,371
Expenditure per pupil	2,991
Balance brought forward from previous year	Nil
Balance carried forward to next year	335,877

² This percentage is lower than in other schools because it is calculated on the basis of a minimum of 31 hours possible teaching time and not the minimum 25 hours recommended nationally.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

45%

Number of questionnaires sent out

1153

Number of questionnaires returned

519

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	28	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	83	17	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	85	14	0	0	1
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	65	33	2	0	0
The teaching is good.	85	15	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	92	8	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	85	15	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	97	3	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	80	19	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	94	6	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	83	17	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	72	26	2	0	0