



Thomas Telford School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123627
LEA Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number 281521
Inspection dates 16 May 2006 to 17 May 2006
Reporting inspector Geoff Hancock AI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	City technology college	School address	Old Park
School category	Community		Telford
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Shropshire TF3 4NW
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01952 200000
Number on roll	1179	Fax number	01952 293294
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2001	Headteacher	Sir Kevin Satchwell

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 18	16 May 2006 - 17 May 2006	281521

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Telford School was formed as a City Technology College in 1991, specialising in mathematics, science and technology. The school attracts students from the neighbouring areas of Telford and Wolverhampton. Most students are from White British backgrounds but the social and ethnic mix broadly reflects the make-up of the local community. The level of deprivation in the community is average but the proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is below average. Virtually no students move to or from other schools. Attainment on entry to the school according to data provided from national tests is exceptionally high and the number of students with special educational needs is below average. The school is extremely popular and demand for places is very high; for admission purposes the school uses nationally agreed selection criteria for City Technology Colleges, designed to ensure that the intake reflects the full range of ability according to national norms.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Thomas Telford is a remarkable school. The outstanding leadership and management of the school are characterised by a relentless belief in continuous improvement and a shared belief in the 'Telford way'. No stone is left unturned when it comes to monitoring teaching and learning; as a result no student falls through the net. There is a very positive ethos in the school. Students expect to work hard, expect to succeed and value their own and others' achievements. Within this caring yet challenging environment, students excel and make exceptional progress, both academically and personally. Both students and their parents feel privileged to be a part of such a successful school. The outstanding teaching ensures that students show positive attitudes to their work and exceed their challenging targets. The majority of teaching is highly focused, exceptionally well planned, challenging and fast paced. Occasionally, though, the teaching is quite dry and students are not given enough opportunity to become actively involved. Students told inspectors they find these lessons much less enjoyable. However, even in these lessons, the students' positive attitudes and the teachers' thorough lesson planning, marking and assessment ensure that students make progress. There is no complacency in the school. The school has a very accurate understanding of its strengths and areas for development and has continued to build on the success recognised in its previous inspection. The school has demonstrated that it has an outstanding capacity to improve. This has been accomplished alongside its drive on learning and achievement and its successful development as a City Technology College. This school is a beacon of excellence. It is not only Thomas Telford School that benefits from the outstanding vision and drive shown by the leadership. The income that has been generated through sales of its on-line ICT course has helped to create two new academies in Walsall and Sandwell as well as helping 90 schools from across the country achieve specialist college status. The school has used its resources very effectively and provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is a happy and positive place, characterised by high expectations and challenge. Standards are exceptionally high and students make outstanding progress. This progress is achieved as a result of an outstanding curriculum, high quality care, guidance, teaching and a total focus on ensuring individuals reach challenging personal goals. The sixth form is very well integrated with the school, and is a natural progression for virtually all students, with well over 90% staying on from Year 11. Students' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy their education, relate very well to their teachers, develop independence as learners and demonstrate a maturity beyond their years. They speak warmly of their educational experiences and participate well in developing their qualities. Students value highly the positive ethos of the school and the rich learning opportunities they are given. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding and this is reflected in the exceptional progress made by students. The school's own evaluation of its performance clearly indicates that there

is outstanding capacity for further improvement. The school judges the effectiveness and efficiency of sixth form to be outstanding; inspectors agree with this judgement. The sixth form provides outstanding value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make greater use of the outstanding teachers within the school to share best practice, particularly in relation to teaching techniques that encourage active participation and enjoyment amongst students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students make outstanding progress through Year 7 and Year 8 and take their Year 9 national tests a year early in Year 8; standards remain exceptionally high. Many students take GCSE examinations in mathematics and English as early as Year 9 and achieve the highest grades. These students start Advanced level courses in Year 10. By the end of Year 10 all students have achieved considerable success in many GCSE courses. By the end of year 11, every student achieves 5 or more A*–C grades and virtually all achieve 11 A*–Cs. So high are the expectations and attention to individual needs that all students make outstanding progress throughout the school. Standards reached in examinations in the sixth form are also exceptionally high and students' progress on both academic and on other courses is outstanding. Many students are entered for Advanced level and other examinations early, reflecting the school's high expectations and challenge.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students at Thomas Telford are confident and self-assured young people and yet they retain a very high degree of humility. Their personal development and well-being, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The excellent development of students' moral and social skills result in absolute racial harmony and excellent relationships between students and with adults. Commendably, the number of exclusions has remained at zero for several years. The level of self-discipline and independence is unusually high and students behave impeccably from the moment they arrive at school right through to the end of the day. This contributes very significantly to the calm, safe, and business-like routines that run so smoothly throughout the school and create an atmosphere where everyone can work and learn without distraction or worry. Students adopt safe practices and lead very healthy lives. They have very mature attitudes towards school and their learning and organise themselves and get on with the job in hand without any fuss. They work equally well independently as they do in teams. These skills are invaluable in preparing them for their adult lives and in helping them to secure and cope with the world of work and responsibility. Students speak highly of their school and clearly enjoy their education and this is reflected in their punctuality, and attendance figures which are

exceptionally high. The exceptionally high standards in students' personal development in the main school are mirrored in the sixth form and reflected in the extremely high retention rates. Students' ability to work independently as well in teams and their sustained work ethic are particular strengths and contribute significantly to the very high standards that they achieve.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding. The planning of lessons and preparation of resources are exemplary. Teachers really know their subjects and this adds confidence to their teaching and challenge to the lessons. Teachers' expectations are extremely high and students show very mature and responsible attitudes to learning. Students are made to work hard and they are set challenging targets. However, they are given every ounce of support to help them achieve them. Very effective use is made of assessment to monitor students' progress and ensure they are aware of what they need to do to improve. Teaching and learning in the sixth form share the same ethos of hard work and success as the rest of the school. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and prepare students extremely well for their examinations. Expectations are exceptionally high and students respond well, working with maturity and independence. The essence of why teaching leads to such effective learning is that so much detailed planning goes into the curriculum, so much effort goes into regularly checking how well students are doing, and so much care and guidance is given to individuals to ensure they achieve their best. Thomas Telford has many outstanding teachers. Lessons from these teachers are pacy, interesting and use a variety of techniques to raise the achievement and enjoyment of students. Not all lessons are like this though and students find some lessons a bit boring because they have to sit and listen or write for long periods. Even in these lessons students are very well behaved and make progress, but their enjoyment of learning is less. Teachers watch each other teach and learn from each other, but they do not always get the opportunity to learn from teachers of other subjects. This is a minor weakness in an otherwise outstanding provision.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Students of all ages are very well served by an innovative and remarkably flexible curriculum which is, in every respect, a model of excellence. The school believes that every student should be taught courses that will enable them to reach the highest levels of attainment, regardless of their ability. As a result, students as young as 14 begin Advanced level courses in English and mathematics along side GCSE and vocational courses. In this school, age is not a barrier to learning. The entire curriculum is available to students and parents on-line. This high quality resource supports learning during lessons as well as extending learning beyond the classroom. The quality of

guidance students receive allows them all, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, to follow the best possible courses when they are ready. The curriculum includes a wide range of work-related learning and business enterprise activities. The programmes and activities offered to sixth formers are also outstanding. As with the main school, the on-line curriculum for post students is highly impressive both in terms of support and challenge. There is a superb range of opportunities for students to take part in enrichment activities. Students enthusiastically join in sporting and other activities in very high numbers.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support given to students, including those in the sixth form, form one of the key reasons why students do so well. Students, as well as parents, speak very highly of this aspect of the school's work. All staff are dedicated and take a real interest in their students and this is instrumental in ensuring students have the confidence to seek help when they need it. The phrase 'Once a Thomas Telford student, always a Thomas Telford student' is clearly promoted and reflects the highly supportive community ethos throughout the school and beyond. The school has extremely effective systems and arrangements for safeguarding students. For example, child protection arrangements are excellent, risk assessments including those undertaken by staff before visits out of school are rigorous and a very able team of support staff is on hand and approachable to students throughout the school day. Healthy eating is effectively promoted. Every teacher and senior manager is directly involved in checking students' progress and setting individual targets, these are shared with both students and their parents. The knowledge that staff have of each individual student is outstanding. The regular testing, assessment and reporting means that even short-term under-performance is identified and rectified very swiftly indeed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The outstanding achievements outlined in this report reflect exceptional leadership and management. This view is shared by both the school itself and by an overwhelming majority of parents. One parent summed this up stating 'Due to the strong leadership and ethos of the school my son realises that he has to be responsible, accountable and dedicated to his work'. Parents correctly believe that outstanding leadership and management, particularly from the visionary head teacher, are fundamental to the splendid opportunities that the school offers to all students. Students' needs are at the heart of everything the school does. Leadership and management of the sixth form are closely integrated with the rest of school life. Throughout the school, leaders and managers regularly review individuals' learning needs to ensure that each student is challenged and supported in equal measure. The leadership team share a common philosophy and work cohesively to ensure that both care and education are of the highest quality. The way the school reacts to challenges is both creative and rigorous. Extensive outreach work (including very substantial financial support to other schools)

replicates many of Thomas Telford's successful methods. Governors are a powerful, capable and well informed group. They have supreme confidence in the school, working very closely with its leaders and monitoring its provision, challenging the school's priorities when required. With a track record of tremendous academic and other successes and excellent current provision, the schools' capacity for continuing improvement is outstanding.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

18 May 2006 Dear Students We really enjoyed our visit to your school. We had a very good time and felt we learnt a great deal. Thank you all very much for the open and frank way that you spoke to us. You are rightly proud of your school and enjoy the rich and varied opportunities that it gives you. Our job is to take a good look at the school and judge the things it does well and the things it needs to do to improve. As well as speaking with you and your teachers we also received a questionnaire return from many of your parents, and we took all these views into consideration when making our judgements. We believe that Thomas Telford is a brilliant school. We were really impressed by how hard you all work and the mature attitudes you have. We particularly liked the way that the older students talk with and look after the younger ones. Even though it is a big school it does feel like a huge family. We agree with you that you are very lucky to go to such a good school. Most of you play a full part in the life of school and take advantage of the cracking range of activities in sport, music and the arts, as well as all the trips and visits. Nearly all of your lessons are really interesting for you and you concentrate really well. In some subjects, lessons could have been more active and varied. You told us that you prefer lessons that give you a range of things to do and so we have asked the school to make sure more of the teaching is like this. Congratulations to all of you for helping to make Thomas Telford such a successful school. Once again, thank you all very much for talking with us. We wish you every success in the future Geoff Hancock Lead Inspector Alexandra House 33 Kingsway London WC2B 6SE T 0207 421 6800 F 0207 421 6707 www.ofsted.gov.uk