

Thomas Tallis School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	100190
Local Authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	335500
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Thomas Gibson

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1636
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	446
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margery Nzerem
Headteacher	Rob Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2007
School address	Kidbrooke Park Road London SE3 9PX
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 34 lessons, undertaking four joint observations with school staff, and observed 34 teachers. They held meetings with staff, students, and governors. Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation form, its monitoring of students' progress towards their targets, and the school development plan. They also considered responses to questionnaires completed by students and 201 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of the strategies of the school to ensure that students make sustained and substantial progress in English
- the effectiveness of the school in improving the levels of attainment of male students and students whose first language is English
- the impact of students' behaviour on the pace of learning in lessons
- the effectiveness of teachers in using the prior learning of students to plan and develop their lessons, particularly for the more-able students.

Information about the school

Thomas Tallis is larger than most secondary schools. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. Slightly under half of the students are from minority ethnic heritages and over a quarter of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is above average, as is the number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are 11 looked-after children. The school has a special unit for students with hearing impairment and another for students with speech and language difficulties. The school is a specialist arts college and has been designated a school of creativity since June 2008. The school has also gained Leading Edge status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Thomas Tallis is an inclusive school which provides a good standard of education. The school's two specialisms, as an Arts College and Leading Edge School, have a significantly positive impact on the life of the school and support an innovative curriculum which provides a broad range of opportunities for students.

Students join the school with below-average levels of attainment and make good progress because of good teaching, a curriculum that has been effectively tailored to meet their needs and a pastoral support programme where students are known well as individuals. Inspectors observed a number of outstanding lessons. However, there still remains some inconsistency in the quality of teaching between departments, reflecting weaknesses in how management deal with the outcomes of lesson observations. The management of teaching and learning is satisfactory rather than good because it does not focus clearly enough on the progress of individual students. Inspectors observed effective examples of assessment in lessons and written feedback to students but assessment overall is only satisfactory. It does not consistently support students to understand the levels they are working at and how they can further improve.

Students are known well as individuals within this cohesive student community. Attendance is above average and students behave well in class, which supports the good progress they make. Most students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the individual support, effective intervention strategies and the inclusive ethos of the school. Students in the sixth form make good progress from below-average starting points because of consistently good teaching and a curriculum that is broad, offering vocational and academic courses at different levels.

While the school provides a good standard of education it has made only limited progress since the previous inspection and capacity to sustain improvement is only satisfactory. Levels of attainment and progress dipped in 2009 because monitoring systems were not effectively implemented across the school to pinpoint where action was needed to maintain standards. A new, rigorous system has been introduced to monitor students' progress and is starting to have a positive impact on redressing this dip but is not yet fully embedded across the school. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and actions to address areas of underperformance are beginning to have an impact. However, leaders recognise that further work is required as the school community prepares to move into new facilities to ensure that a common vision for the school is shared among all the staff.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Raise the level of attainment so that by August 2011 at least 60% of students gain five or more A*-C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of assessment, so that students clearly know the levels they are working at and understand precisely and can articulate the steps they need to take to improve
 - developing the management of teaching and learning so that there is a greater focus on the learning and progress of students in lessons
 - ensuring that the improved tracking systems of students' progress are embedded and fully utilised across all curriculum and pastoral areas.
- Ensure that by the time the school moves into the new facilities a clear vision has been developed and embraced by all sections of the school community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Students enjoy their learning. Attainment is broadly average and students make good progress across a range of subjects because of much good teaching. However, students whose first language is other than English progress at a faster pace than students whose first language is English. Students listen and make links with previous learning, and work collaboratively in groups. They are inquisitive and willing to ask questions of their teacher and each other. Behaviour in lessons is good and makes a positive contribution to learning and progress. Around the school, behaviour is generally calm and students take ownership of large spaces in a responsible manner. Students say incidents of poor behaviour are rare and are dealt with effectively. Exclusion rates have declined but remain above the national average.

Students with identified special educational needs and/or disability make good progress overall and achieve in line with their peers, because of good in-class support and effective monitoring of their progress. However, students whose progress has led to concern do not do as well and their attendance is below that of other groups in the school. Attendance overall is above average and shows an improving three-year trend. Support for vulnerable groups of students is having a positive impact on reducing the number of students persistently absent from school. Students have structured opportunities to develop their enterprise capabilities via challenge days; one group, for example, developed a manifesto to become a fair trade school. Students apply their basic skills securely in a range of contexts.

In the students' questionnaire the very large majority of students said they feel safe at school. Students' awareness of what constitutes risk or a dangerous situation develops well as they rise through the school. Students value their 'Tallis lab' lessons, which helps provide a greater awareness of the potential dangers of the internet. Older students say there is some bullying, but when this occurs it is effectively dealt with by the school.

The extent and quality of students' contribution to the wider community is good. The school council enables students to contribute to decisions in school and students are represented on the full governing body of the school. Through the Arts College status

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students have worked within the local community on a joint venture on the regeneration of a local housing estate, with a focus on enhancing social spaces.

Students are curious about the world around them and engage enthusiastically in artistic and cultural opportunities and discuss moral dilemmas through the 'well-being faculty and curriculum'. Students respect each other's needs and interests; for example, a group of students in Year 7 worked on a project to support parents from the Somali community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of the teaching in the school is good. The majority of lessons observed during the inspection were good and a fifth were outstanding. Relationships between staff and students are good and help to create a positive learning environment. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and use questioning skilfully to develop learning. Lessons are creatively planned with a focus on engaging students in their learning. In the outstanding lessons, lessons were well paced, with highly effective use of students' prior learning to plan activities. Learning was consolidated and developed

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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through immediate feedback to students on their progress through written comments and verbal feedback. In lessons where students progress at a slower rate, there is too much teacher direction, inconsistent use of assessment information for different groups of students, particularly high-attaining students, and imprecise learning objectives that do not focus explicitly on raising achievement and improving learning.

The curriculum provides well-organised, imaginative and effective opportunities for learning. This enables students to have a broad range of experiences which supports their personal and academic development. The curriculum is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it is meeting the needs of students. The introduction of applied learning courses in, for example, physical education, is having a positive impact on progress and attainment. The school's specialisms have supported developments in the curriculum and there are clear and appropriate pathways in visual, media and performing arts. The innovative well-being curriculum has a positive impact on the personal, social and emotional development of the students. For example, students in Year 7 are involved in a cross-curricular exchange through a 'blogging project' with a school in Dubai allowing students to compare and contrast social and educational experiences.

The provision for care, guidance and support in the school is good. Transition arrangements between the key stages are well established and include individual interviews with parents, carers and students. The support is good for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and effective use is made of external agencies to support vulnerable students. The development of the learning support unit has been effective in reducing the number of students excluded from school by providing individual strategies to engage students at risk of underachieving. The units for students with hearing impairment and for students with speech and language difficulties provide highly effective, tailored individual support which is smoothly integrated within the school.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Progress since the previous inspection has been limited because effective systems of managing performance are not effectively embedded across the school community. During this academic year, changes to the style of leadership and management and an increase in the monitoring of performance have had a positive impact on the pace of students' learning. However, these systems have been introduced quickly and with

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limited consultation and are not fully established within the school community. This has led to a degree of uncertainty among staff. The governing body is well organised and is beginning to develop a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and to provide an appropriate degree of support and challenge.

The management of teaching and learning is satisfactory. While the system of monitoring lessons is now extensive, the quality of evaluation is variable and does not consistently focus on the learning outcomes for students.

The school has developed good partnerships, particularly through its specialist status, to promote learning across the school and to extend learning across the community. For example, the 'perspective project' provided an artist in residence to work with Year 5 pupils in a local primary school. The school, particularly through the work of the learning support unit and its specialisms, has developed good partnerships with outside organisations. The school has a clear understanding of the religious, ethnic and socio-economic context in which it works. The annual 'tree dressing' celebration organised by the school is an important feature of community cohesion within an area of significant local regeneration.

The school's inclusive ethos underpins its approach to ensuring equality of opportunity for all. The school collects and analyses data, so that it is able to address areas of inequality in achievement and participation. It is successfully closing the gap in attainment between boys and girls. There is a good level of participation in extra-curricular activities and the school actively promotes access to these opportunities for more vulnerable students. The provision for safeguarding is good.

The school has developed positive relationships with most groups of parents and carers, as evidenced by the positive responses received from the parents' and carers' questionnaire. Parents receive a termly report and attendance at parents' evenings is high; over 90% of parents attended a Year 11 parents' evening during this academic year. Departments such as mathematics also provide curriculum evenings to help parents and carers support their children's learning. A parents' panel is now established to improve further engagement with parents and carers.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2

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The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Students achieve well in the sixth form. Attainment is in line with standards nationally. Teaching is good and is effective at meeting the needs of different groups of students, with many lessons being engaging and encouraging independent thinking. Assessment information is now used well to monitor students' progress over time. The 'one-to-one' tutorial programme has been effective at improving students' rates of progress. However, there is still variation in the progress of students between subjects. The curriculum offers a broad range of opportunities and is reviewed regularly to ensure it meets the needs of all students at different levels. Since the last inspection report there has been a significant increase in the opportunities available for students in the developing enrichment programme.

Students in the sixth form make a positive contribution in activities such as supporting the literacy of younger students and work in the local community. One student commented, 'We are expected to do well here, in all of the things we do.'

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. All sixth form leaders have a secure understanding of students' needs, as they work closely with colleagues to create an environment where students can develop into well-rounded young adults. Students value the care, guidance and support they receive, especially how staff monitor their progress. Students receive good guidance towards the transition into university or the world of work. However, the arrangements for the effective monitoring of attendance are not fully embedded in the culture of the sixth form.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

A small minority of parents and carers responded to the questionnaire. The very large majority of the responses were very positive about the school. A few parents and carers raised concerns about the school not taking account of their suggestions and points of

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view. Inspectors agree in their recommendations that all sections of the school community need to be able to contribute to the development of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas Tallis to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 201 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1636 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	66	33	115	57	15	7	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	63	31	123	61	10	5	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	71	35	117	58	12	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	34	98	49	29	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	50	25	131	65	13	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	24	117	58	28	14	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	35	17	131	65	24	12	2	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	65	32	113	56	10	5	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	55	27	116	58	22	11	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	64	32	108	54	18	9	9	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	21	109	54	28	14	9	4
The school is led and managed effectively	59	29	119	59	14	7	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	85	42	97	48	14	7	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 June 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Thomas Tallis School, Kidbrook Park Road, Blackheath, London SE3 9PX

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I would like to thank you for your welcome and for helping us with the inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and talking to you in lessons and around the school. We have taken your views into account in coming to our overall judgement that Thomas Tallis is a good school.

The school's specialism as an Arts College and Leading Edge school has a significant impact. You told us you value the extra opportunities you are given in a wide variety of activities and appreciate the individual help you receive from your teachers.

To improve your school further we have asked the school to ensure that:

- the level of your attainment is raised so that by August 2011 at least 60% of you gain five or more A* to C grades including English and mathematics. We have asked that the school does this by:
- improving the quality of assessment, so that you clearly know the levels you are working at, and understand precisely and can articulate the steps you need to take to improve
- developing the management of teaching and learning so that there is a greater focus on your learning and progress in lessons
- ensuring that the improved tracking system that monitors your progress is embedded and fully used across all curriculum and pastoral areas.
- by the time the school moves into the new facilities a clear vision has been developed and embraced by all sections of your school community.

Your school has the potential to further improve and you can support this improvement by maintaining your good attendance and positive attitudes to learning.

Yours sincerely

Thomas Gibson

(lead inspector)

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