

Thomas Gainsborough School

Wells Hall Road, Great Cornard, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 0NH

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have secured the commitment of staff, parents and pupils to their highly aspirational vision for the school. They work together as a community for the benefit of pupils.
- Leaders care for the pupils extremely well. Pupils are confident and safe.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Respect and courtesy are the norm.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next steps in their education or employment. Few leave school without a clear understanding of what they will do next.
- Leaders and governors closely monitor the progress pupils make in different subjects. They insist on high standards. Most pupils make good progress in most subjects.
- Students in the sixth form receive a good standard of education. They are well taught and make good progress across a range of subjects.
- Most teaching is good. Teachers use good subject knowledge and positive relationships to secure pupils' learning.
- Additional funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well used. These pupils make accelerated progress across the curriculum.
- Leaders remove the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face. This significant group makes progress similar to that of other pupils nationally.
- Teachers do not always consider what pupils already know and what they are capable of doing. Some pupils make less progress than they otherwise would because of this.
- The most able pupils do not make as much progress as others in the school. Not all teachers expect enough of these pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by:
 - providing work that is hard enough for the most able pupils to excel
 - making sure that teaching consistently builds on what pupils already know and can do.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors are ambitious for pupils. They have a deep understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and take effective action to make improvements. As a result, most pupils make good progress across a wide range of subjects.
- Leaders and governors have been successful in securing the commitment of parents, pupils and staff to their vision for the school. Pupils speak positively about their experiences and about the quality of education they receive. They are particularly complimentary about the excellent help they get from 'student services'.
- Almost all parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school is well led and managed and would recommend the school to others. Every member of staff who completed their electronic survey agreed that the school is calm and aspirational for all pupils.
- Leaders have tailored the curriculum to meet the individual needs of pupils. The innovative 'grammar', 'broad' and 'STEM' pathways enable pupils to begin to specialise from Year 7. This is balanced by the breadth of subjects all pupils study until the end of Year 9. As a consequence, pupils are well prepared to make the right choices for key stage 4 study. They finish Year 11 with qualifications appropriate to the next stage of their education or employment.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underpinned by an extensive extra-curricular programme. For example, pupils participate in trips and activities, such as archaeological digs, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and the 'awe and wonder event'. This makes sure they gain a good understanding of the world around them.
- Funding for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is used well. Leaders have high expectations and put appropriate support in place to help these pupils. Pupils benefiting from individually tailored teaching in the 'access' groups make rapid progress from their starting points. Across the school, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are confident, assured learners.
- Leaders understand the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face. They take effective steps to overcome these. For example, funding is provided for disadvantaged pupils to take part in trips, and curriculum provision is adapted for individuals. As a result of the focused work of leaders, the attendance of this significant group is improving. Disadvantaged pupils make similar progress to non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is used well. Pupils who arrive in Year 7 with weak literacy and numeracy are given additional teaching throughout, and sometimes beyond, Year 7. Most of these pupils make at least as much progress as their peers, and many make more progress.
- Leaders and governors manage the performance of staff well. Staff are given targets which link their own development needs with school improvement priorities. Leaders provide training to help staff succeed. As a consequence, the quality of teaching across

the school continues to improve.

Governance of the school

- Governance is provided by the Samuel Ward Academy Trust. It operates a local governing body with specific responsibility for the Thomas Gainsborough School. Governors at all levels have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and take effective actions to support the school in making improvements.
- Leaders of the trust conduct an annual audit of provision at the school. Their accurate analysis helps school leaders to understand what does not work well and to improve standards. Trust leaders support school leaders by providing teaching expertise and opportunities for teachers to work collaboratively across the trust. This has been particularly helpful in improving outcomes in English, languages and science.
- Members of the local governing body are thorough in their scrutiny of standards. They have a precise understanding of the areas in which leaders should secure improvement. Governors' regular 'scrutiny groups' provide valuable challenge and support to leaders as they raise standards.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff undertake regular training and receive timely briefings to ensure that their understanding of child protection is up-to-date.
- Leaders' work to ensure that pupils are happy and safe is evident throughout the school. Leaders ensure that pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They identify specific risks which may affect pupils who attend this school, and work effectively to reduce those risks.
- Pupils report that the extremely rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively and rapidly. Leaders have established a very powerful culture of respect and understanding. Pupils value this.
- Leaders keep accurate records of concerns regarding pupils' physical and mental welfare. They hold regular meetings to review the well-being of pupils and share pertinent information with staff. Leaders are unrelenting in following up their concerns with others when the support of external agencies is required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Across most subjects, in all year groups, effective teaching, learning and assessment support the good progress that pupils make. Teachers underpin the work they do by creating positive working relationships with pupils. The mutually respectful environment this creates is highly conducive to learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of how pupils should behave. Pupils respond well to this and are attentive during lessons. As a consequence, lesson time is well used to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The good quality of teaching in the school is secured by effective induction and ongoing support for teachers. Trainee and newly qualified teachers spoken with were

highly positive about the quality of support they receive. Most staff who responded to Ofsted's electronic survey agreed that beneficial support is given for professional development. This has led to an increase in the amount of high-quality teaching that pupils receive.

- Teachers check the progress that pupils make with other schools across the trust. For example, in English, teachers have been able to prepare pupils well for new GCSE requirements by comparing their assessment of pupils' work to that of other schools. Working with the trust, the school has appointed lead practitioners to several subject areas. These experts have worked with groups of teachers to enhance teaching across the school. Because of this, outcomes across a range of subject areas are improving.
- Teaching is particularly strong in history and 'access' lessons. In 'access' classes, the work is precisely targeted to the needs of pupils, and expectations are extremely high. Pupils make excellent progress as a result. In history, teachers' high expectations and incisive questioning make pupils think and develop a deep understanding of what they learn.
- Some teachers do not base the work they set for pupils on a clear understanding of what those pupils can already do. As a result, some pupils undertake work which is too easy for them, and some undertake work which is too hard. Because of this, some pupils in some lessons do not make as much progress as they could.
- Teachers do not consistently have high expectations for the most able pupils. The work they set is not always hard enough. As a result, the most able pupils do not make the same strong progress as pupils who begin Year 7 with lower outcomes in national assessments.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- A comprehensive and cohesive programme of advice and guidance prepares pupils very well for the next step in their education or career. Employers visit the school to help pupils with interview skills and pupils go outside the school to develop an understanding of the wider world. For example, pupils who are interested in the care industry take part in community work.
- All pupils benefit from work experience. Pupils maintain 'employability folders' leading to the award of five ribbons for excellence in 'progress', 'sport', 'creative arts', 'employability' and 'community'. Their success in achieving these is celebrated in a graduation ceremony attended by all members of their year group. The percentage of pupils who leave school without a sustained destination in education, employment or training is low.
- Leaders ensure that the school values, such as resilience, respect and happiness, are part of daily life. Pupils hear about these values in assembly and discuss them during registration. They demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of school values and give examples of how they have used them in their own lives.
- Pupils are effusive about the extent to which their personal well-being is catered for.

They say that staff with responsibility for pupil welfare are 'discreet' and deal with things 'really quickly'. Pupils across all key stages are confident that any bullying is resolved swiftly and effectively. They do not worry about being bullied.

- Leaders take care to identify matters which concern pupils currently at the school. This enables them to target resources at the areas of most need. For example, work is currently being undertaken to support the emotional well-being of pupils. Leaders monitor the impact of the help they give to ensure that it improves pupils' well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Clear systems underpin outstanding behaviour in and out of lessons. Pupils are exceptionally polite at all times. Their behaviour in corridors, social areas and classrooms is calm and conducive to a highly positive working environment.
- Pupils' highly positive attitudes to learning strongly support the progress they make across the school. For example, pupils take responsibility for arriving at lessons before the end of lunch. They ensure that when it is time for the lesson to start, they are present and ready to learn.
- In lessons, pupils listen carefully to their teachers and other pupils. They consider the ideas and views of others and respond well. Pupils work consistently through lessons and do not interrupt the learning of others.
- Pupils feel confident to be different. Pupils gave examples to inspectors of how their friends had been supported with their own differences and explained that discrimination is not acceptable. Pupils are certain that having a different background or outlook on life is respected in this school. Everyone is treated equally.
- Leaders keep a close eye on the attendance of groups of pupils so that none are disadvantaged by low attendance. Overall attendance remains in line with the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From their starting points, most pupils make very strong progress in mathematics. By the time they complete key stage 4, they achieve more than their peers nationally.
- In 2015 and 2016, the progress made by most pupils in English was in line with national expectations, but was not as strong as their progress in mathematics. The progress pupils now make in English is similar to the very strong progress they make in mathematics.
- Most pupils make good progress in humanities subjects, achieving above national expectations. Despite a slight dip in attainment in history in 2017, the progress of pupils in humanities remains good throughout the school.
- In 2015 and 2016, pupils did not make as much progress in science as they did in other subjects. In modern foreign languages, pupils achieved below national expectations in 2015 and 2016. The school has taken firm action to improve these subjects. Pupils now make better progress in key stage 3, but not yet in key stage 4.

- Students in the sixth form make good progress in both academic and vocational qualifications. There are no subjects in which students underperform.
- In most subjects, disadvantaged pupils make progress which is in line with non-disadvantaged pupils nationally.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make accelerated progress from their starting points. Leaders and teachers have high expectations of what these pupils can achieve. The effective support pupils receive in specialist lessons and across the curriculum meets their needs well. As a result, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well.
- The most able pupils make progress that is in line with national expectations, but they do not make as much progress as pupils who join the school with lower starting points. This is because teachers are not aware of how highly these pupils could achieve. Teachers do not consistently set work which requires them to excel.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leadership of the sixth form is strong. Leaders have been successful in their ambition to expand the sixth form. This has allowed leaders to employ specialist sixth-form staff and to broaden the curriculum. Courses available meet the needs of a wide range of students.
- Outcomes across the sixth form are good. In both academic and vocational subjects, students make consistently strong progress. The proportion of students improving their grades in GCSE mathematics and English during resits in the sixth form is high.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good. Teachers typically demonstrate strong subject knowledge and communicate this effectively so that students' understanding grows. In the best lessons, teachers target their guidance to build on the knowledge students already have. Students find this helpful. It enables them to make more rapid progress.
- The highly positive attitudes to learning evident across the school continue in the sixth form. Students want to learn. They are attentive in lessons and make thoughtful contributions to discussions. Students value the support that teachers give them and use lesson time well.
- Leaders provide sixth-form students with a range of opportunities to develop leadership skills. For example, sixth-form students mentor younger pupils. They are involved in the recruitment of staff and in the school parliament. Students appreciate being listened to. Their requests have led to the introduction of new courses, for example. They feel valued.
- Leaders provide very effective advice and guidance to sixth-form students. Students say careers education is 'amazing'. They benefit from links with around 150 different businesses and receive visits from a range of industries. All students complete a record of achievement with an individual employer and undertake a career management module. Students develop a folder of evidence and career action plans based on research and supporting documentation. Retention from Year 12 to Year 13 is high, and the number of students leaving the school not in education, employment or training is low.

School details

Unique reference number	141639
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10036246

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1397
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mike Parish
Headteacher	Wayne Lloyd
Telephone number	01787 375232
Website	tgschool.net/
Email address	wllloyd@tgschool.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about exam and assessment results or curriculum information on its website.
- The school does not comply with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish about exam and assessment results or curriculum information.
- The school is part of the Samuel Ward Academy Trust.
- The school is a larger than average-sized secondary school serving the area of Sudbury.

- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who have support for special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school uses The Albany Pupil Referral Unit for alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupil's attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 71 lessons.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, five governors and the chief executive officer of the trust.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils of different ages individually and in groups.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including the school’s self-evaluation, spending reviews and plans, behaviour and attendance records, and minutes of governing body meetings. They also looked at a review of the school’s performance undertaken by the trust.
- Inspectors reviewed the school’s single central record of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors considered 423 responses to Parent View, 63 responses to the staff questionnaire and 169 responses to the pupil survey.

Inspection team

Andy Hemmings, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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