Inspection of a good school: Thamesmead School

Manygate Lane, Shepperton, Middlesex TW17 9EE

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2022

Outcome

Thamesmead School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school with a strong sense of community. Everyone is included. The school's house system brings together pupils from a range of diverse backgrounds. Leaders make sure that disadvantaged pupils get the financial help they need to take part in extra-curricular activities. As one pupil put it 'No one gets left out.' Pupils love their house competitions, such as quizzes, dodgeball and bake-offs. They are proud of the rewards they receive.

The school sets high standards and pupils achieve well, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Many pupils do very well in public examinations. Subject teachers bring learning to life for pupils through links to current affairs, such as international climate conferences. Well-chosen school texts talk about topics that mean a lot to pupils, such as equality and fairness.

Some pupils needed extra help to get back to routines following the COVID-19 pandemic. School leaders have reacted promptly. They have tighter procedures in place to manage behaviour. Governors provided extra resources to support pupils who need more help. Pupils are now behaving very well. The school is a safe place for pupils to learn and staff deal with any bullying effectively.

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

Leaders have designed an ambitious curriculum. They model the standards that they want staff and pupils to follow. Staff value the support they get from leaders. Staff training helps teachers teach their expert subject knowledge to ensure pupils learn this in a memorable way. Teachers know their pupils well, especially those with SEND, and make sure they have the essential knowledge they need to succeed.

Subject leaders introduce new topics thoughtfully to support pupils' next steps. For example, in mathematics, each new topic includes reminders from previous ones, so pupils remember things more easily. In English, key stage 4 pupils understand 'Macbeth'

better because they have explored Shakespearean language through studying other plays in key stage 3.

Pupils get a rich diet of challenging academic subjects. However, the number of pupils taking a modern foreign language at key stage 4 is declining. This is especially true for disadvantaged pupils. That means the school is not yet meeting the government's national ambition for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc). School leaders recognise this. There are clear plans in place to improve numbers taking languages, but these are still at an early stage.

Teachers expertly assess what pupils understand and identify what knowledge still needs to be learned. Teachers give very clear explanations and accurate feedback. They show learners how to write their answers in a clear and logical way. This helps all pupils, but especially those with SEND, to know more and remember more.

Recently, some subjects saw a higher-than-usual turnover in staffing. Leaders have now appointed new teachers. However, during the transition, some pupils learned one or two topics less thoroughly. Leaders are tracking this to ensure that any gaps in pupils' knowledge are closed.

Pupils learn specialist vocabulary in every subject. For example, mathematics teachers show pupils how to unlock the language of examination questions. In this way, pupils know which mathematics skills they need to use in their answers. Teachers help pupils identify key words in more complicated sentences. Pupils are then able to read with greater understanding. Reading for pleasure has a high profile with younger pupils, although less so with some of the older boys.

School leaders' actions to improve pupils' behaviour have been very successful. Most pupils now learn without any disruption. Strong systems pick up any incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils who need help with managing their behaviour are well supported.

Pupils enjoy many extra-curricular clubs and activities. These cover a wide range, including sports, music, debating societies and learning Mandarin. School leaders have looked carefully at how they support pupils' wider education. They have relaunched an improved personal development programme. This prepares pupils very well for their future careers and for life in modern Britain. Academic subjects contribute well to pupils' cultural awareness and knowledge of current affairs. Pupils gain useful leadership skills through roles, such as pupil prefects and 'house reps'.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors and senior leaders ensure that safeguarding is well led across the school. Training is appropriate, regular and thorough. Staff are both caring and vigilant. They flag any concerns quickly and thoroughly. Staff believe that it is 'better to be safe than sorry'.

Pupils have many people they can go to if they have a concern. They are taught how to keep themselves safe online and in life generally. School leaders recruit a wide variety of external agencies when they need support. Leaders make all the necessary checks when they appoint new staff. Records are kept securely and diligently.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, particularly where there has been higher turnover in staffing, the curriculum has been less well implemented. Pupils do not always gain the knowledge they need in the right order to support their future learning. Leaders should ensure that any remaining gaps in pupils' curriculum knowledge are filled.
- Too few pupils take a language at key stage 4. This is especially the case for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. This may impact negatively on pupils' next steps and limit their choice of future careers. Leaders should ensure that the proportion of pupils taking the full EBacc, including disadvantaged pupils, increases in order to meet the government's national ambition.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2012.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use Ofsted Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further guidance on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for published performance information about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' 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.

School details

Unique reference number	137237
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	10240105
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1012
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Bill Kerr
Headteacher	Phil Reeves
Website	www.thamesmead.surrey.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13 June 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The current headteacher took up his post in September 2017.
- The school uses two registered alternative providers for a very small number of pupils.
- The school uses two unregistered providers on a part-time basis each week to support sporting achievement.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with school leaders, trustees and a range of different staff. They also met with pupils from the school's student leadership team.

- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, geography. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also visited lessons in a number of other subject areas and observed pupils at breaktimes, around the school site and before and after the school day.
- The lead inspector scrutinised the school's safeguarding documents, the central record of employment checks, safeguarding policies and practice, some attendance records, behaviour logs, the school's self-evaluation form and documents on the school's website.
- The lead inspector also spoke on the telephone to providers of alternative provision.

Inspectors considered the responses of all the pupils, parents and staff who replied to Ofsted's surveys, as well as parent emails sent in during the inspection.

Inspection team

Keith Pailthorpe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Carlyle	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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