

Inspection of a good school: The Thomas Aveling School

Arethusa Road, Rochester, Kent ME1 2UW

Inspection dates:

13 and 14 September 2022

Outcome

The Thomas Aveling School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils and students say that they are happy and they feel safe. They say that staff care about them and help them to do their best. Pupils show a pride in their school. They work hard and want to do well. The school's extensive careers programme ensures that pupils are well prepared for their next stage. Pupils have increasingly high aspirations for their future.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are very well supported. Disadvantaged pupils are well known and prioritised. Higher performing pupils spoke well of the 'Brilliant Club' and visits to universities. All pupils spoke positively about the care received from the school. Pupils are kind to each other and behave very well in lessons. They move around the school respectfully and in an orderly manner. Pupils say that bullying is quickly dealt with when it does occur. Expectations for behaviour are very high.

Leaders make sure that all pupils can take part in a wide range of clubs that inspire and interest them. For example, there are opportunities to play sports and music, as well as activities that develop their leadership skills. Pupils value the opportunities provided to broaden their experiences. Those in the sixth form enjoy supporting younger pupils to achieve their best.

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

The curriculum is ambitious. It is carefully structured to ensure that all pupils are well supported and actively encouraged. This includes pupils with SEND, those who are disadvantaged and those who are high performing. Subject leaders think carefully about their curriculum. They ensure that it carefully matches the national curriculum.

Leaders have thoughtfully considered the benefits of different length key stages. Triple science is now available to a growing number of pupils, early English examination entries have been halted and there is a much greater focus on languages resulting in an increase in the numbers taking the English BaccaLaureate (EBacc).

The Year 7 curriculum builds well upon the work of the partner primary schools. Leaders enjoy productive links with these schools. They use these links to monitor the curriculum to ensure continuity. Curriculum continuity is also well considered between Year 11 and the sixth form. Bridging courses ensure that sixth-form students are well prepared. As a result, retention rates are very high.

The school's focus on reading is having a positive impact. Leaders have developed strategies to improve pupils' reading skills. The English department has been particularly active in ensuring that reading has a high priority. However, other subjects are not as involved as they might be. School leaders are aware that further work is necessary to fully embed reading across the school.

Pupils and students are well supported by the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. The programme is delivered through stand-alone lessons, tutorial time and assemblies, as well as different subjects. Further work is necessary to ensure that this provision is developmental and coherent across the school. The sequencing of the content is not coherent enough to allow the curriculum to be pursued in greater depth.

In the classroom, teachers make effective use of their subject knowledge to provide quality teaching and effective support. They check pupils' learning regularly and provide feedback on assessment activities. This ensures that pupils learn more and remember more. Teaching is well supported through thoughtful resources and a welcoming environment. Relationships are positive.

The curriculum extends beyond the academic, and actively supports pupils' wider personal development. Pupils have a growing understanding of diverse cultures and ethnicities. Equality of opportunity is actively promoted. Pupils show respect for one another and contribute well to the school community.

Leaders have very high expectations. Professional development ensures that teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy are strong. Training ensures that lessons are increasingly engaging and valued. The school is highly regarded in the community and enjoys positive relationships with local primary schools.

Sixth-form leaders are focused on supporting teachers' subject knowledge and ensuring high quality, personalised professional development. Students confirm that teachers are knowledgeable. They appreciate the range of courses on offer. Students feel listened to and value the support for their future career pathways.

Staff have confidence in their leaders. They feel their workload is manageable through sharing resources and working cooperatively. They are proud to be a member of staff. There is a strong focus on school improvement initiated by the headteacher and strongly supported by the trust. Governors are actively involved in the life of the school. They have a good understanding of the curriculum informed by school visits and trust feedback.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding. The welfare, safety and well-being of all pupils are a high priority. Staff receive regular training and frequent updates. They know how to identify risks and what to do if they have any concerns. The school conducts thorough checks when appointing new staff.

Pupils are happy and safe. They know how to stay safe online. They receive age-appropriate lessons on issues such as consent and sexual harassment. The support for safeguarding and welfare is of an extremely high quality. Leaders work well with external agencies, including the local authority.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Reading is not yet fully embedded across the school. As a result, reading does not allow all pupils to access the full curriculum and assessment practices are still being refined. Leaders across the school should continue to develop strategies to assess, develop and encourage pupils' fluency, confidence and enjoyment of reading.
- The PSHE programme is not sufficiently developmental and coherent. The programme requires further development to pull together content across stand-alone lessons, tutorial time and assemblies, as well as subjects. Leaders should develop a more efficient approach to the sequencing of the curriculum, to allow content to be developed in greater depth.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in June 2016.

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	137376
Local authority	Medway
Inspection number	10203122
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1205
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	178
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Wendy Rogers
Headteacher	Paul Jackson
Website	www.thomasaveling.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 and 15 June 2016

Information about this school

- The Thomas Aveling School is a larger than the average-sized, non-selective 11-to-18 school in an area with selective education. The school is part of the Beyond School Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provider.
- 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 educational 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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates:
<http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2022