

Thomas Estley Community College

Station Road, Broughton Astley, Leicester, Leicestershire LE9 6PT

Inspection dates

29–30 January 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	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 successfully and effectively managed the introduction of a key stage and the significant growth of the school.
- Leaders are aspirational both for pupils and for staff. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and have clear plans for improvement.
- The quality of teaching is good. Most teachers use strong subject knowledge to plan learning that challenges pupils.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve pupils' behaviour. Most pupils behave well.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is consistently strong. Current pupils are making good progress in English.
- Current pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are making good progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils' progress is improving across most year groups.
- Leaders and governors do not thoroughly evaluate the impact of additional government funding for disadvantaged pupils on these pupils' progress.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is above the national average. However, some disadvantaged pupils are too often absent.
- Some safeguarding records are not as precise, accurate or detailed as they should be.
- In each year group, pupils have a wide range of opportunities to nurture their leadership skills and develop their character.
- Leaders provide a comprehensive and well-planned careers programme that raises pupils' aspirations.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the school.
- Where necessary, leaders make effective use of alternative providers to meet pupils' individual needs.
- The school is inclusive, providing for all pupils' needs and promoting a culture of tolerance and equality.
- The impact of subject leaders' work in improving the quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent.
- Some teachers do not provide pupils with clear guidance as to how they can improve their work.
- When teachers do not plan learning that is interesting, some boys become disengaged and distracted.
- Some teachers do not have consistently high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work. They do not always insist on pupils using spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - leaders and governors monitor and evaluate the impact of additional funding for disadvantaged pupils closely, so these pupils make consistently good progress
 - all subject leaders monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning effectively within their areas of responsibility
 - leaders record and monitor their actions to keep pupils safe rigorously and in a timely manner.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
 - provide consistent guidance, in line with school policy, as to how pupils can improve their work
 - plan learning that interests and engages all pupils, particularly boys
 - have consistently high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work and their accurate use of spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare by:
 - reducing the proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent from school, so it is in line with the national average.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders have overseen a period of significant change and turbulence within the school, as a new phase has been added and the number of pupils and staff has grown significantly. They have managed this process with determination and a clear vision, modifying systems and processes when required, and ensuring that teachers have the necessary expertise to deliver new subjects and courses.
- Leaders know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They accurately prioritise areas that need development and implement appropriate strategies to bring about improvements. Leaders are not complacent; they are aspirational both for pupils and for staff.
- The leadership of teaching is strong. Leaders' rigorous system of monitoring provides teachers with individual guidance and effective training to develop their skills. Teachers value the support they receive to improve their practice.
- Leaders have taken decisive action to improve pupils' behaviour. Leaders monitor incidents of pupils' poor behaviour closely and evaluate the impact of the strategies they employ to manage poor behaviour regularly. Most pupils now behave well.
- Senior and middle leaders are increasingly confident in the accuracy of their assessments in most subject areas. They use pupils' assessment information to hold subject leaders closely to account and to identify pupils who require additional support.
- Leaders have developed a sophisticated network to support pupils' pastoral needs. Through a combination of form tutors, mentors, house team staff and learning support assistants, pupils know there is always someone to help them.
- The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) has a detailed understanding of these pupils' needs. Leaders accurately identify any pupils who require additional help, often at the point of their transition into the school. They closely monitor the attendance and progress of these pupils, and, when necessary, use additional funding to provide these pupils with individual support to bring about improvements.
- Leaders provide learning support assistants with regular training to develop their skills and then deploy them effectively to support pupils with SEND in their learning. Current pupils with SEND are making good progress from their starting points.
- Leaders have a clear rationale for the spending of additional monies to help Year 7 pupils who have fallen behind their peers catch up with their literacy and numeracy. Such targeted support allows these pupils to make strong progress.
- Leaders provide pupils with a curriculum that is rich in opportunities and experiences, including a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Since its introduction, the key stage 4 curriculum offer has been refined to ensure that pupils' differing needs are met with a choice of different pathways.
- Leaders are passionate about ensuring that the school is inclusive for all. They work hard to make all pupils welcome. For instance, pupils from a nearby special school share lessons and social time daily. Where necessary, leaders arrange for pupils to access alternative provision, while retaining them on the school's roll.

- All teachers receive professional development that balances their individual needs with those of the school. Teachers who are still relatively new to the profession feel well supported, both with their teaching and their pastoral responsibilities.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is an integral part of school life. Pupils develop as well-rounded individuals who value diversity and equality, across a range of different religions and cultures. In the words of one parent, 'My child is happy and maturing well, with kindness and tolerance.'
- Pupils speak with confidence about what it means to be a British citizen, including the associated rights and responsibilities. For example, all pupils take part in the school's annual 'Parliament Week', which focuses on understanding democracy.
- Leaders have taken effective action to improve attendance. A recently appointed attendance officer is already having an impact, with clear systems in place to monitor pupils' attendance closely and take appropriate and timely actions if there are concerns.
- The majority of staff are positive about their experiences of working at the school and are supportive of its leaders. Staff morale is high.
- Leaders have readily sought expertise from local secondary school leaders within the Thomas Estley Learning Alliance (TELA) and taken action in response to the feedback received.
- Leaders' strategies to support disadvantaged pupils in key stage 4 are beginning to improve these pupils' progress, for example through the work of the pupil premium achievement mentor who tracks these pupils closely. However, leaders do not evaluate the impact of this additional funding on all disadvantaged pupils' outcomes sufficiently well. In particular, leaders' plans to support disadvantaged pupils in key stage 3 lack precision and coherence.
- Some subject leaders manage their areas of responsibility proficiently, having forged beneficial links with other departments in local schools. However, some subject leaders are not yet able to carry out their roles without additional support.

Governance of the school

- Governors have worked closely with, and supported, school leaders as the school has undergone significant changes. They know the school well and have used their skills to provide leaders with a growing amount of challenge and scrutiny.
- Governors are increasingly well informed and have received appropriate training, particularly in relation to interpreting key stage 4 outcomes. However, some aspects of their oversight are not as rigorous as they should be.
- Governors have not held leaders to account effectively for the additional monies received for disadvantaged pupils.
- While the trust has had oversight of the school's key priorities, it has not provided leaders or governors with sufficient support or challenge. A recently appointed trustee has explicit responsibility for the school. However, their work is yet to begin.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are taught how to stay safe. For instance, pupils know how to reduce the risks posed by mobile phones and social networking sites.
- Staff and those responsible for governance are well trained and know how to identify signs of neglect or abuse. They understand their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding, including radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders responsible for safeguarding have received up-to-date and relevant training, including in relation to child sexual exploitation and county lines. They provide pupils at risk with close support and ensure that no pupil goes missing from education.
- Leaders have carried out all the appropriate checks to ensure that alternative providers take appropriate actions to safeguard pupils. Regular contact with the providers and visits help to ascertain that the pupils who attend there are safe.
- Leaders carry out all of the necessary checks in a timely fashion before adults begin to work or volunteer at the school.
- Leaders do not always ensure that records of safeguarding concerns are as precise, accurate or detailed as they should be.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Most teachers' high expectations encourage pupils to engage enthusiastically with their learning. There is a healthy mutual respect between adults and pupils.
- Teachers use strong subject knowledge to challenge pupils to develop a more in-depth understanding of the concepts being studied.
- There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in English. In this subject, teachers plan well-structured lessons that develop logically pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers accurately assess pupils' work and use this information to inform future learning.
- The teaching of mathematics is a strength. Teachers know their pupils well and plan tasks to meet their needs. For instance, inspectors observed the most able pupils in Year 10 investigating quadratic sequences, while those pupils with SEND received close support. Such skilled teaching helps all pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly adept at transferring their literacy and numeracy skills from one area of the curriculum to another. For example, pupils use their mathematical skills with confidence during science and geography lessons. Most pupils have well-developed vocabulary in relation to their age.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers build on pupils' prior knowledge to plan learning that provides them with an appropriate level of challenge. For instance, in Year 7 science, pupils used experiments to discuss different types of energy and develop their use of accurate scientific terminology. In these circumstances, pupils applied their knowledge to new situations with ease and deepened their learning.
- Many teachers use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding, clarify any

misconceptions and move their learning on to the next stage. This is particularly the case in key stage 4. For example, inspectors observed teachers probing pupils' understanding of a Shakespearean text in English, while in history they evaluated different sources of evidence.

- Most pupils contribute to discussions with confidence. They are keen to share their ideas and discuss their learning. For instance, in Year 8 textiles, pupils provided an inspector with assured explanations for the rationale behind their choice of designer on which to base their work.
- Learning support assistants are deployed effectively by the SENCo. They liaise closely with teachers and provide precise support to specific pupils. Pupils welcome the close working relationships they develop with these assistants, one pupil stating, 'They will help you with anything.'
- Pupils value the opportunity to develop their reading skills. Year 7 pupils who read to an inspector did so with confidence and listened respectfully to each other. They read with varying degrees of expression and were able to use their skills to decode unfamiliar words successfully.
- Where pockets of weaker teaching exist, teachers do not plan learning effectively, leaving some pupils, often boys, disengaged and distracted.
- Pupils' presentation of their work is variable, particularly boys. Indeed, the quality of an individual pupil's work can vary between different lessons, due to teachers' inconsistent expectations.
- Teachers do not apply the school's marking and feedback policy consistently. Similarly, they do not all ensure that pupils use spelling, punctuation and grammar accurately in their written work. As a result, not all pupils know how to improve their work.
- A minority of teachers do not ensure that their own speaking and writing skills support pupils in developing their use of language well.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and value the help and support they receive from staff.
- The trust's mission of 'building leadership and character together' is clearly evident throughout all years. Pupils develop their leadership skills, for instance through being sports and language leaders, joining the sea cadets or taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme.
- Staff provide pupils with a range of strategies to help them stay safe physically and to promote good mental health. All pupils value the recently established well-being zone as a safe place where they can receive help, for example if they are anxious.
- When pupils find it more challenging to modify their behaviour, leaders have forged strong links with alternative providers. Leaders closely monitor the attendance and

progress of these pupils, ensuring that they are safe and their needs are being met.

- Leaders provide a comprehensive and well-planned careers programme that raises pupils' aspirations. Pupils receive appropriate guidance in each year group and are well informed. Year 11 pupils have clear plans for their next steps and value the support they receive to aid their decision making.
- A majority of parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, said their children are happy and safe in school and well looked after.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils, staff and parents agree that pupils' behaviour in school has improved significantly. Pupils understand the standard of behaviour expected of them and the majority conform to the school policy. They say that most staff are consistent and fair when responding to incidents of poor behaviour. Pupils are becoming more competent at regulating their own behaviour.
- Leaders' actions to support individual pupils are having a positive impact. For instance, a 'Men-tor' focuses specifically on helping boys to improve their conduct and overall engagement with school.
- The proportion of pupils who are removed from lessons due to poor behaviour has reduced. Similarly, the proportion of pupils excluded from school has noticeably declined and is below the national average. No pupils have been permanently excluded from school in the past three years.
- Bullying is rare. Pupils are able to identify different types of bullying. Most say they have an adult to talk with if they have any concerns. They are confident that any issues would be resolved quickly.
- Overall, pupils' attendance is above the national average. Similarly, the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent is below the national average. However, too many disadvantaged pupils are regularly absent from school.
- A small minority of both pupils and parents who responded to Ofsted's online surveys expressed a concern that some lessons are disrupted by the off-task behaviour of some pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, pupils made strong progress in mathematics, including boys and pupils of different prior abilities, compared with the national average. The progress of current pupils in mathematics continues to be a strength of the school.
- The progress of current pupils in English is strong due to a marked improvement in the quality of the teaching. Teachers' focused support of pupils ensures that any areas of weakness are readily resolved.
- Pupils' progress in science, modern foreign languages and humanities was broadly average, compared with national averages, in 2018.
- Many pupils with SEND make good progress from their starting points. The SENCo

ensures that the teaching of these pupils is well directed towards their individual needs.

- In 2018, disadvantaged pupils' progress was weak across a wide range of subjects, compared with national averages. However, while the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in key stage 4 is still not good, it is improving markedly. Many of these pupils receive close support that is helping them to catch up, particularly in mathematics, English and science.
- Pupils in key stage 3 are benefiting from improvements in the quality of teaching and are making good progress, particularly disadvantaged pupils.
- The first set of key stage 4 results for the school in 2018 revealed pupils' overall progress was below the national average, due to poor teaching over time and a lack of exam readiness. Current pupils in key stage 4 are making good progress in most subjects. However, in a small number of subjects, pupils' attainment remains too low.
- While the gap between boys' and girls' progress is beginning to close, girls are still making better progress than boys, particularly at key stage 4.
- In 2018, the vast majority of Year 11 pupils who left school secured education or training placements. However, some pupils did not access courses at the level of which they should have been capable, because they underachieved by the end of Year 11. Leaders continue to work with those who are yet to secure an appropriate placement.

School details

Unique reference number	138527
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	10053306

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	880
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr Melvyn Booley
Principal	Mrs Mandi Collins
Telephone number	01455 283263
Website	www.thomasestley.org.uk/
Email address	admin@thomasestley.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The school converted to academy status in March 2012. In September 2016, the school became part of the Success Academies Trust. The school's principal is also an academy trustee.
- The school is a teaching school within TELA.
- The principal took up the position in September 2016, having previously been the vice principal and the director of the teaching school. At the same time, two new vice principals were appointed. Since then, an assistant principal and a senior leader have been added to the senior leadership team.
- The number of pupils on the school's roll has increased significantly due to the addition of a key stage 4 phase in September 2016. In August 2018, the school received its first set of key stage 4 examination results.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is just below average.
- The school has received informal support from several local secondary schools within TELA as it has gone through its age-range change.
- The school shares a site with Birkett House Special School. Pupils from the special school attend some lessons in school and use the school's facilities during social times.
- The school currently uses the following alternative providers: Willow Bank Day School; Autism Outreach Service; Enstruct; and the South Leicestershire Behaviour Partnership.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 49 lessons across a wide range of subjects and in both key stages. More than half of these lessons were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed tutor time and two assemblies.
- Inspectors reviewed work in pupils' books in a range of subjects.
- Inspectors held a range of meetings with staff, including with senior and middle leaders, and teachers.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body, including the chair and the co-vice chairs of the governing body. She also had a telephone conversation with an academy trustee.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour before school, during lessons, and during breaktimes and lunchtimes.
- Inspectors spoke formally with pupils from key stage 3 and key stage 4. Inspectors also spoke informally with other pupils.
- An inspector listened to pupils from Year 7 read.
- An inspector spoke with representatives from alternative providers that pupils from the school attend.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents relating to the school's provision, including: self-evaluation and improvement planning; minutes of the governing body and trust meetings; plans related to additional government funding; behaviour, attendance and exclusion records; information about the attainment and progress of all pupils; pupils' safeguarding records; external reviews; and information on the school's website. The lead inspector also checked the school's single central register and the school's system for recruiting staff.
- Inspectors evaluated the 134 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, including the 29 free-text responses.
- Inspectors considered the 64 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and the 96 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils and students.

Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jackie Thornalley	Ofsted Inspector
Ellenor Beighton	Ofsted Inspector
Laurence Reilly	Ofsted 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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