

# Thomas's Fulham

Hugon Road, Fulham, London SW6 3ES

## Inspection dates

6–8 March 2018

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school

- The proprietor and senior leaders have successfully maintained the school's outstanding provision. They ensure that all of the independent school standards are met.
- Teachers use their good subject knowledge and accurate assessments to ensure that pupils make strong and sustained progress.
- Most pupils achieve considerably above the standards typical for their age in English and mathematics by the end of each key stage.
- The rich and intriguing curriculum enables pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to study subjects in depth.
- Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. There is something on offer to interest and inspire everyone.
- Pupils and parents and carers express confidence in the school's safeguarding arrangements. Pupils are expected and taught to accept some responsibility for their own well-being.
- Middle leaders' roles have developed significantly since the previous inspection. Their contributions to school improvement are increasingly effective and are being further enhanced.
- Pupils behave very well and demonstrate exceptionally positive attitudes to learning.
- The outstanding provision in the early years ensures that children are thoroughly prepared for the continuing high expectations in Year 1.
- The proprietors ensure that the school's work is evaluated by external professionals and colleagues from other Thomas's schools.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (the independent school standards) and associated requirements.

## **Full report**

### **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Further develop opportunities for leaders to use the school's accurate self-evaluation to identify and share areas of excellent practice.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Outstanding

- The proprietor and senior leaders have ensured that Thomas's Fulham remains an outstanding school and that all of the independent school standards are met. The headteacher's relentless commitment to continuing school improvement inspires the whole community.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the impact of leaders' work. For example, in comments typical of others, parents said that the positive culture of the school 'brings out the best in everyone' and 'stems from the top'. Staff appreciate the support they receive from leaders to develop their skills; and the particular attention the headteacher pays to their well-being, as well as that of pupils.
- Leaders have sustained the outstanding quality of teaching across the curriculum. They have a detailed knowledge of teachers' performance and evaluate this by rigorously checking the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- The excellent curriculum enables pupils to achieve well and enjoy a broad range of inspiring experiences. Teachers implement the curriculum effectively so that pupils are exceptionally well prepared for their future lives. For example, pupils are able to reflect upon and learn from historical events and apply their knowledge in the context of the school's and British values. This was seen in pupils' understanding of the difference between what Ancient Greeks thought about democracy and the democratic system in the United Kingdom today.
- The role of middle leaders in school improvement has been enhanced since the previous inspection. This results in high levels of staff morale and collaboration. Senior leaders are determined to develop these roles further, with middle leaders using self-evaluation in their areas of responsibility to identify and share strong practice and to feed into school improvement planning. For example, following a review of the use of digital technology, plans are in place to widen the range of equipment and ensure that it is used effectively.
- Leaders exemplify excellent learning practices for staff to emulate. Professional learning groups check and provide challenge to help leaders evaluate their work accurately.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is strong. Pupils consider a wide range of moral issues which increase in complexity as they become older. There is a wide range of cultural activities on offer and leaders ensure that pupils are taught the skills and attitudes needed to make the most of them. For example, in drama productions, pupils are encouraged to understand the importance of everyone being involved, not just the leading players.
- Leaders ensure that pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are provided with effective support. They check that additional adults and resources are making a difference to the progress these pupils make.

### Governance

- Since the previous inspection, the proprietors and the vice principal have further strengthened opportunities for leaders to share strong practice and exchange ideas across the group of Thomas's schools. The proprietors ensure that an external independent view

of the schools effectiveness is sought and acted upon. They are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses, for instance in understanding how well the curriculum enables pupils to explore subjects in depth.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's safeguarding policy makes reference to the latest statutory guidance and is available on the website.
- Leaders and the proprietor are vigilant in ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are fit for purpose. They ensure that regular and timely training is put to effective use. The exceptionally open and positive relations between staff, parents and pupils mean that any concerns can be picked up promptly. There are well-established and clearly understood procedures for assessing risk and responding to an emergency or disruption to the normal life of the school.
- Leaders ensure that checks on the suitability of staff and information related to safeguarding concerns are carefully recorded. They have robust and well-organised arrangements to ensure that the premises are safe. They are constantly seeking to further strengthen the already secure safeguarding arrangements.
- The exemplary work of the school to promote pupils' personal development strengthens their resilience in the face of potential threats to their well-being. For example, typically, pupils are sufficiently confident and self-assured to challenge stereotypes and keep an open mind. This is preparing them well to challenge extremist or discriminatory views.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Outstanding

- Teachers and additional adults demonstrate enthusiasm and apply subject knowledge effectively across the whole range of subjects taught. They are confident in explaining new concepts and ideas and effective in checking that pupils of all abilities have understood. Teachers set consistently high expectations, which lead to outstanding achievement for pupils.
- Teachers exemplify a strong learning community, leading by example in the way they continue to improve their own skills and share effective practice. A sense of drive and purpose is evident in lessons across the whole school as a result of this. Teachers reinforce the skills and attitudes necessary to help pupils become self-motivated learners, curious about the links between different subjects and how ideas apply to their own lives.
- Teachers insist that pupils use accurate vocabulary, including the correct terminology, in each subject taught. They provide effective guidance for pupils who speak English as an additional language so that they become confident at using technical vocabulary.
- Teachers and additional adults ask probing and demanding questions of pupils. This leads pupils to think of their own interesting questions, which teachers encourage them to follow up. In particular, teachers enable the most able pupils to probe subject matter in great depth.
- The teaching of reading is consistently effective. Teachers have applied their training to help them become even more consistent in supporting pupils' early reading skills so that the teaching of phonics is highly effective.

- Teachers promote high-quality writing by reinforcing accurate, grammatically correct sentences and the effective use of phonics and spelling across all subjects. They pick up when pupils make mistakes in using words which they may need to explain themselves.
- Teachers ensure that pupils make substantial progress in mathematics. They set work which challenges the most able to apply and deepen their skills in explaining, reasoning and identifying patterns in mathematics.
- The teaching enables pupils of all abilities to sustain progress from their different starting points. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are sensitively and skilfully supported by teachers and additional adults. This enables these pupils to sustain excellent progress, while being enabled to play a full part in the life of the school.
- Homework supports learning well. For example, in French, the use of homework supports pupils' learning of vocabulary and ensures that most-able pupils and those whose first language is French make the very strong progress of which they are capable.
- Pupils and parents are overwhelmingly positive about the quality of teaching. Pupils particularly appreciate the clarity with which teachers help them understand how well they are doing.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Outstanding**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils' 'learning for life' work is rich in examples of their developing understanding of how to play their part as active and responsible citizens.
- Pupils benefit from visits to the school by a wide range of speakers, including parents. Pupils develop the confidence and empathy to ask searching, well-informed questions of visiting speakers, including on sensitive subjects such as the Holocaust.
- Pupils are expected to learn how to assess risks for themselves. For example, older pupils considered the risks posed by flying a drone indoors during computing lessons.
- Pupils have a sophisticated understanding of how the internet works and can explain how to stay safe from the potentially malign influences they may encounter when online.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. In lessons, pupils demonstrate a thirst for learning and determination to succeed. For example, pupils enjoy explaining what they are trying to find out and use excellent vocabulary to describe their learning.
- Reflecting teachers' exceptionally high expectations for pupils' learning behaviours across the whole school, pupils sustain concentration and remain resilient when faced with difficult learning challenges. There is very rarely any need for teachers to remind pupils about rewards and sanctions related to behaviour.
- Leaders' records reinforce the views of pupils, staff and parents that bullying and other discriminatory behaviour is very rare in the school.
- Pupils' attendance is good and attendance rates are above average when compared to similar schools.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Outstanding

- Pupils build on their excellent achievement in the early years by sustained, strong progress across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics. By the end of key stage 2, nearly all achieve the expected standards and the great majority exceed them. Pupils leave the school exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Pupils' work across the curriculum demonstrates consistent, substantial progress in developing skills and knowledge specific to subjects taught. For example, in computing, effective teaching has enabled pupils to acquire and develop skills rapidly.
- The consistently effective teaching of phonics ensures that almost all pupils achieve the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check. Older pupils who read to inspectors and talked about their reading demonstrated secure comprehension skills. Pupils read increasingly challenging texts, including the work of classical authors; they apply important lessons learned from these effectively to their own writing.
- Pupils make excellent progress in learning to write. They benefit from a wide range of opportunities to develop their writing skills across the curriculum.
- Pupils make strong progress in mathematics. The most able pupils are challenged to explain and understand increasingly complex mathematical patterns and relationships.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make sustained progress across a wide range of subjects. Teachers are skilled in ensuring that these pupils learn and use subject-specific vocabulary.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities benefit from well-deployed additional staff and effective explanations from teachers. This enables them to make strong progress from their starting points.
- The extensive range of artistic, sporting, cultural and social activities on offer enables most pupils to discover and develop talents and interests beyond the timetabled curriculum.

## Early years provision

## Outstanding

- Most children enter the Reception Year with skills which are at least typical for their age. By the end of the year, a much higher proportion than found nationally achieve a good level of development. Most children make substantial progress and exceed a good level of development.
- Children acquire a secure understanding of the school's values alongside their academic development. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. They behave with grace and consideration. Most can adapt their behaviour to suit different circumstances.
- Leaders ensure that all of the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage are met, as well as the independent school standards. Safeguarding is effective and arrangements for the supervision of children and assessment of risk are secure.

- Teachers challenge children to take responsibility for their own care and think about staying safe as soon as they are ready. Parents typically express confidence in the work of leaders to keep children safe.
- Leaders in the early years ensure that children's development is assessed accurately on arrival, using a wide range of information. This includes the information provided by parents and previous educational providers.
- Teachers expect parents to be extensively involved in supporting children's work as they progress through the early years. They provide regular and well-received advice and information to help parents continue to support children's learning at home.
- Teachers are effective in helping children to rapidly improve their emerging skills in reading, writing and mathematics irrespective of their starting points. For instance, during the inspection, most-able children in the Reception class were able to differentiate between a circle and a sphere; and some children were identifying countries around the world from a world map. 'Learning for life' books demonstrate the breadth of children's activity and how they are expected to think for themselves. For instance, they were asked to design a safe area in the playground where they would feel calm.
- Leaders ensure that consistent use is made of accurate spoken English when teachers and additional adults communicate with children.
- Teachers demonstrate creativity in using outdoor learning to provide wider opportunities in supporting the development of children's skills. For example, when children visit the 'forest school', the opportunity is grasped to investigate measures on a larger scale. Leaders have made the most of recent physical improvements to the outdoor environment in the school.

## School details

Unique reference number	130239
DfE registration number	205/6402
Inspection number	10038159

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	435
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Tobyn Thomas
Headteacher	Annette Dobson
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,375 to £6,357 per term
Telephone number	020 7751 8200
Website	<a href="http://www.thomas-s.co.uk">www.thomas-s.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:fulham@thomas-s.co.uk">fulham@thomas-s.co.uk</a>
Date of previous inspection	26 November 2014

## Information about this school

- Thomas's Fulham is a co-educational day school for boys and girls aged from four to 11. It is one of a group of schools owned and operated by Thomas's London Day Schools.
- About a quarter of pupils speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than average. None of these pupils has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs.
- All pupils attend full time.
- The school makes no routine use of any off-site provision.
- The school has a website which includes all of the information it is required to publish.
- The school was last inspected in November 2014, when it was judged to be outstanding.



## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted at one day's notice at the request of the Department for Education.
- Inspectors met with senior and middle leaders to discuss their work and conducted a range of observations in classrooms with them.
- Inspectors visited all year groups in the school and looked at a wide range of pupils' work.
- Inspectors also conducted a tour of the premises and looked at records related to leaders' checks on safety and maintenance.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including leaders' checks on the progress of pupils and records related to safeguarding.
- The lead inspector met with one of the proprietors and the vice-principal of the Thomas's group of schools.
- Inspectors spoke with pupils and heard some of them read.
- 45 responses to the staff questionnaire were considered alongside 194 written responses on the Parent View survey. Some parents also spoke informally with inspectors.

## Inspection team

Andrew Wright, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Paula Farrow

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Clementina Aina

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