

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: The Thomas Alleyne Academy

High Street, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 3BE

Inspection dates:

15 and 16 October 2024

Outcome

The Thomas Alleyne Academy has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of the school is Mark Lewis. The school is part of Hart Schools Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by a chief executive officer, who is also the headteacher of this school and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Hilary Clifford.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils, including those in sixth form, are positive about life at the school. Most pupils enjoy their learning and the range of interesting subjects they can study. A vast array of clubs means pupils have many opportunities to develop their interests and make new friends. Thoughtful careers advice combined with close links with local colleges, employers and charities provides pupils with high-quality advice and guidance. Pupils build their confidence and consider ambitious next steps. Consequently, students move on to a range of appropriate destinations.

Consistently applied behaviour routines support pupils to behave well. Most lessons proceed without interruption as pupils focus on their learning. Pupils are respectful to adults and each other. Bullying does not happen often and is addressed by staff effectively. The effective pastoral team is on hand to support pupils if they need help or guidance.

Through the school's 'character' education, pupils learn important life skills such as compassion and perseverance. Pupils work hard with their learning, living up to the school's high expectations. Pupils are proud of their roles in supporting others, such as through peer mentoring. The school and sixth form are a positive place for pupils to learn and be themselves.

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

The curriculum, including in the sixth form, is ambitious. Pupils access a range of relevant subjects and qualifications that provide suitable stepping stones to further study or work. Close connections with local colleges and employers ensure that pupils are clear about the range of options open to them when they leave the school.

The school regularly reflects on what is working and what needs to be made better. Since the previous inspection, the school has refined key areas of the curriculum to help pupils retain their knowledge. Broadly, the school's changes are having a positive impact. The school's outcomes in national tests continue to improve. More pupils are achieving the English Baccalaureate (Ebacc) than before.

Overall, each curriculum area orders knowledge logically. Staff teach the curriculum well by providing effective learning opportunities for pupils to build their knowledge over time. Teachers' explanations are clear. Pupils' learning is supported well with regular opportunities to rehearse and build on what they know. Most checks on understanding support staff to know where pupils may need extra help or practice. Most pupils, including those in the sixth form, achieve well.

In a small number of areas, there is further work taking place to improve how staff check pupils' learning and understanding. Sometimes, the checks are not as useful as they should be in supporting staff in plugging gaps in pupil understanding. In these rare instances, pupils find it harder to learn.

Staff get helpful information about the varying needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff make appropriate adaptations to their lessons to support pupils with SEND to access the curriculum. Consequently, many pupils with SEND achieve well.

When pupils join the school, careful checks identify if they need further help with their reading. Staff use targeted reading support to address the gaps in pupils' reading knowledge. Pupils frequently catch up with their peers and become more confident and fluent readers.

Most pupils behave well because staff deal with behaviour in a clear and consistent manner. An emphasis on rewards ensures that pupils are motivated to work hard and be kind to others. The school uses behaviour data well to spot patterns and evaluate its support for pupils. Staff know the varying needs of pupils and use a range of strategies to support pupils to behave well. The school works closely with pupils and their families to ensure pupils attend school regularly.

A well-planned personal, social, health and economic education curriculum builds effectively on the school's values and 'character' education. Sixth-form students, for instance, learn about important topics such as budgeting and finance. Pupils learn about managing relationships and the importance of working hard. Tutor periods and assemblies clearly link to the school's values of 'empathy, courage and determination'. A highly

effective careers programme builds pupils' ambition and aspirations for the future. Trips and visitors to school help to broaden their life experiences. Each part of the school's approach to personal development acts as a positive 'springboard' for pupils' next steps and beyond.

The governors and the trust ably support and challenge leaders. The school supports staff well with their workload and well-being as it drives through improvements. Staff and the trust have worked together to ensure standards have been maintained since the previous inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a small number of curriculum areas, assessment is not as effective as it could be. It does not always align with the recently improved curriculum. In these instances, it is harder for staff to spot gaps in pupils' understanding. Pupils find it more difficult to build on their learning. The school should ensure that all its assessment aligns with the knowledge taught and is efficient and useful for staff to spot gaps in pupils' understanding.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. 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's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection 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 for overall effectiveness in June 2015.

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](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	140037
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345381
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
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	1,011
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	100
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Hilary Clifford
CEO of the trust	Mark Lewis
Headteacher	Mark Lewis
Website	www.tas.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15 October 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of Hart Schools Trust.
- The school uses one registered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Year 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a range of leaders, including the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and the school's special educational needs coordinator.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector spoke to the chair of the trust.
- The lead inspector held a meeting with those responsible for governance, including a range of governors and trustees.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke with a range of pupils on both days of the inspection. Inspectors spent time with pupils at breaktimes to observe behaviour and speak to pupils about school life.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The lead inspector considered the responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors spoke to a range of staff over both days of the inspection and considered the responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- The lead inspector considered the responses made by parents to Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.

Inspection team

Damian Loneragan, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Caroline Dawes

Ofsted Inspector

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