

Thomas Alleyne's High School

Dove Bank, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire ST14 8DU

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2016

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
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has established an unwavering focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and set high expectations for what the school can achieve. As a result, pupils' rates of progress have risen markedly since the last inspection.
- Leaders make sound judgements, draw up wide-ranging and detailed plans, and check carefully on the impact of their actions. They collaborate very effectively with the other schools in the local area.
- Governors make a strong contribution to the school. They are exceptionally well informed and hold senior leaders to account.
- The 16 to 19 study programmes are good and improving further. Learners make good progress in lessons and benefit from a wide range of additional activities.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and explain ideas clearly. They often use discussion well to explore and deepen pupils' understanding.
- Pupils typically make good or better progress. Standards at Key Stage 4 are particularly high in the creative arts, humanities and in English.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress and are catching up rapidly with their classmates and other pupils nationally.
- Pupils have overwhelmingly positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in lessons and during social times, and take a pride in their work. They feel safe in school and are right to do so.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Some teaching is less effective, especially where teachers do not identify and challenge pupils' misconceptions or superficial understanding. Occasionally, work is not planned well enough to provide a high level of challenge for all groups of pupils in the class.
- Progress in a few subjects, most notably in modern foreign languages, lags behind that in
- Pupils sometimes do not act on written feedback and this reduces the rate at which they improve their work.
- A small number of subject leaders are not having as great an impact on pupils' achievement as others.

other areas.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all teachers reflect the best practice in the school by:
 - implementing the school's assessment policy so that pupils make good use of feedback to improve their work
 - setting work which consistently provides a high level of challenge for all groups of pupils within the class
 - using questioning expertly to identify pupils' misconceptions and encourage them to think more deeply.
- Raise standards of achievement throughout the school by ensuring that pupils and learners make progress in all subjects that is at least in line with that of pupils nationally.
- Further improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by increasing the impact of the training the best teachers and leaders provide for their colleagues.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has significantly raised expectations for what both staff and pupils can achieve. She has placed a clear and consistent priority on improving the quality of teaching and learning, and as a result pupils now make good or better progress across a wide range of subjects. Standards continue to rise and the capacity for further improvement is very good.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's performance is thorough and balanced, and allows them to draw up detailed and relevant plans for improvement. These plans enable leaders and governors to check on progress regularly. Leaders' identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching seen during the inspection matched those of the inspectors.
- Teachers assess the attainment of all pupils in the main school every half term. They use this information to judge whether each pupil is on track to achieve their target in that subject at the end of Key Stage 4. Leaders intervene promptly to provide additional support for those pupils at risk of falling behind.
- Leaders use performance-management effectively to hold staff to account for their performance. Where teachers' work does not yet meet the required standard, leaders ensure that pay rises are withheld.
- The school has spent the pupil premium grant most effectively to provide additional teaching on an individual and small group basis, and to ensure that disadvantaged pupils are able to take full advantage of the additional opportunities offered by the school. Leaders have wisely adjusted expenditure this year to address the low attendance of some disadvantaged pupils, although it is too early to measure the impact of this adjustment on their progress.
- Leaders have provided extensive training to improve the quality of teaching. Leaders draw on best practice in other schools and also on the abilities of the school's own most skilful teachers. Staff, including teachers at an early stage of their careers, say that this is proving very helpful in improving their effectiveness. This has not yet, however, eliminated all the weaker teaching from the school.
- The school plays a key role in the Uttoxeter Pyramid, the collaborative organisation which also includes three middle schools and 13 first schools in the area. This has enabled leaders in the partnership to plan the organisation of the curriculum at Key Stage 3 and check on the reliability of assessments. Leaders are also at the centre of a wide-ranging debate about teaching, which is stimulating professional dialogue across the pyramid. One consequence is that arrangements for the admission of pupils in Year 9 are impressive.
- The school's curriculum is broad at Key Stage 4, providing a good range of subjects. It includes a land-based science course which meets both local employment opportunities and the aspirations of pupils and parents. Learners who enter the sixth form can choose from a wide range of academic courses and a few vocational courses offered to meet learners' aspirations. The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport and the arts.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively through taught lessons, through a comprehensive programme of assemblies and through the use of tutor time. Some pupils and some learners on 16 to 19 study programmes told inspectors that they would like to be further prepared to take up their places in British society. The school has recently introduced a 'Respect' programme to ensure that pupils are fully aware of the range of cultures and identities in modern Britain.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective and meet statutory requirements. Staff keep careful records, work well with parents and react quickly to involve other agencies to help pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. Staff are well trained to identify any pupils who may be at risk.
- The school pays particular attention to providing support and guidance for those pupils who have limited aspirations, for example by ensuring that they benefit from work experience. As a result, almost all pupils find appropriate placements in further education and training. A recent careers fair attracted more than 40 exhibitors. However, some pupils told inspectors that routine careers guidance sometimes lacked impartiality and that they had to wait to access specialist advice.
- Subject and other leaders entirely share the headteacher's commitment to high standards and appreciate the trust she has placed in them. They have ensured that judgements made about pupils' work are consistent and use a network of other schools to check on their accuracy. However, to date, a few leaders have not secured the rate of improvement required to keep pace with the rest of the school.

- The local authority has reviewed the school's progress and helped leaders to identify other schools where there is good practice, for example in modern foreign languages. Support for the school's work to improve attendance has been limited.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have very effective oversight of the school. They are impressively well informed about the nature of education, the school and its wider community. Governors support leaders in planning to improve the school. They ask searching questions about pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching in the school, standards of behaviour and the impact of the pupil premium, which is tracked on an individual basis. Consequently, they are able to hold leaders closely to account for the school's performance.
 - Governors have a strong command of staffing issues. They ensure that the headteacher manages the pay and performance of the staff so that only good teaching is rewarded and weaker performance is tackled effectively. Although the school is not currently in deficit, governors are fully aware of the difficulties posed by the school's current circumstances and are working with the local authority to ensure the school works within its budget.
 - Governors have a wide-ranging understanding of risk and check that all safeguarding requirements are met.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Teachers have very good relationships with their classes, both in the main school and in the sixth form. Classrooms exude a positive atmosphere.
- Teachers display good and sometimes excellent subject knowledge, often supplemented by a thorough understanding of examination syllabuses and mark schemes. They explain new ideas clearly to pupils and, when appropriate, how pupils can obtain the best marks in examinations.
- Teachers set high standards for their pupils and expect them to present work neatly. In some subjects, such as art and photography, outstanding examples of work by past pupils model the standards required and inspire the current generation of learners. This provides an additional incentive for the most-able pupils to reach their potential.
- The best teaching succeeds in making sure that pupils deepen their understanding and think for themselves. For example, in a number of science and mathematics lessons during the inspection, teachers encouraged pupils to work out their own approaches and formulae. In a Year 11 history lesson on Nazi Germany, the teacher's questions repeatedly challenged pupils to refine their appreciation of women's experiences.
- Teaching is commonly well planned to ensure that pupils learn well. One pupil commented that in art, 'The teacher is highly organised so that we know what we need to do now, next lesson and in the future.' Teachers routinely check on pupils' progress, and provide further support or additional work to groups or individuals when this is appropriate. Classroom activities follow on smoothly, so that no time is wasted.
- Leaders plan carefully for the learning of pupils who have special educational needs or disability, taking the advice of external partners where appropriate. They monitor progress frequently, and provide additional teaching if pupils are at risk of falling behind. Teaching assistants are involved in the planning of the lessons and provide effective support.
- Since the last inspection, teachers have improved the quality and consistency of the feedback they give to pupils. In English, art and humanities subjects in particular, teachers provide precise guidance on how pupils can improve their work. The school's assessment policy requires pupils to respond to this guidance, but the care and frequency with which they do so is variable.
- In mathematics, most teachers combine pupils' practice of calculation and algebra with the requirement for them to apply skills in new ways and extend their mathematical reasoning. They encourage pupils to express mathematical ideas and relationships orally.
- In a small minority of lessons, some of these strengths are missing. Teachers fail to identify when pupils do not understand and so are unable to adjust the learning to help them pick up the thread of the lesson. Questions are limited to recalling facts and pupils' superficial answers are not challenged or explored. Occasionally, the work set does not provide a sufficient challenge, because it is too easy for at least some members of the class. In discussion with inspectors, pupils were keenly aware of these differences.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils feel entirely safe in school and the parents who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, agree. The pupils who spoke with inspectors reported that the large school site is well supervised, and good health and safety procedures were evident during the inspection. Incidents of bullying are rare, and staff deal with them effectively when they arise.
- The school teaches pupils and learners in the sixth form how to be safe in many respects. They receive clear and detailed advice about online safety, which is reinforced by robust procedures for the use of school computers. The school provides guidance on sexual health, and emotional and physical well-being. However, pupils and learners told inspectors that they would value more attention to their personal development, to help them prepare fully for life when they leave school.
- The school has robust procedures for the recruitment of staff and the checking of visitors to the school. The school's strong house system ensures that staff are acutely aware of the needs and interests of individual pupils, and work very effectively to ensure their welfare and security.
- Pupils respect the staff and understand how their attitudes to learning contribute to their academic success. This inclines them to be willing and conscientious students. Leaders increasingly open up discussions with pupils about their learning and experiences, but some pupils reported that their voice is not always heard.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently positive, and they approach their work with commitment and often with enthusiasm. They bring the right equipment to lessons, take a pride in their appearance and present their books tidily. When occasionally the pace of learning slows, they become passive and look somewhat uninterested, but almost always remain polite and patient.
- Pupils told inspectors that learning is disrupted very rarely, typically when a class is taken by a supply teacher. Inspection evidence confirmed this.
- The school records behavioural incidents meticulously. There are clear and effective procedures for addressing more serious incidents of poor behaviour, including a period of one, two or three days in the school's inclusion room. In these circumstances, staff encourage pupils to reflect on their own behaviour and they monitor pupils' conduct when they return to the main school. Few pupils reoffend. The rate of fixed-term exclusion is low.
- Attendance overall is in line with the national average and increasing slowly. The attendance of some groups of pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, remains below that of all pupils nationally. In response, the school has overhauled its procedures for tracking pupil absence, and is prioritising work with a few families to improve the attendance of a small number of pupils with complex needs.
- Pupils' conduct at social times and moving between lessons is orderly and responsible. They respect the school's facilities and drop very little litter.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Achievement has improved greatly since the last inspection. The attainment of pupils who left the main school in 2015 was above average. Standards were particularly high in humanities and creative arts subjects. When these pupils were in Year 6, their attainment was average, but it was another two years after that before they joined Thomas Alleyne's High School.
- The rate at which pupils make progress has also increased rapidly since the last inspection. In 2015, the proportions of Year 11 pupils who made or exceeded expected progress in English and in mathematics were all above the national average. The most-able pupils made particularly good progress in these subjects, but the progress of the comparatively small number with the lowest levels of attainment lagged behind that of their classmates. Information supplied by the school, and confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that pupils in current Year 11 are on track to make even better progress.
- In 2015, disadvantaged pupils left the school on average a grade and a half behind their classmates in English and in mathematics. Compared with other pupils nationally, they attained just over a grade lower

in both subjects. However, the overall progress of disadvantaged pupils leaving the school in 2015 represented a marked improvement on that of previous years, such that in many subjects it was in line with that of all pupils nationally. The progress of those currently in Year 11 is on course to be better still.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability respond well to the detailed planning of their work and make good progress overall. Information supplied by the school indicates that pupils currently in Key Stage 4 are catching up in English, but that their progress in mathematics is weaker.
- Pupils read widely and fluently, and are encouraged to carry a reading book with them at all times. One day a week, form time is devoted to reading. E-books, newly introduced to the school library, are popular. Leaders have plans to intensify the focus on reading, including a range of special events in the summer term.
- Information supplied by the school, and confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that the current progress of pupils, including the most able, is above average but remains a little variable. For example, progress in Year 10 is not as strong as that in Year 11. Pupils' and learners' progress in some subjects lags behind that in other curriculum areas. Inspectors found that progress was strengthened when teachers encouraged pupils to address their misconceptions by responding to the feedback in their books.

16 to 19 study programmes

are good

- The leadership of the 16 to 19 study programmes is strong. Leaders have high expectations and the sixth form is a confident, purposeful community. It currently draws almost all its learners from the main school and offers a good range of predominantly academic courses. However, leaders have considered carefully the needs of a wider range of pupils, and are amending the curriculum to add to the limited vocational provision. New courses will be ones which the school can deliver successfully from within its resources and which appeal to learners.
- Achievement on the 16 to 19 study programmes is rising. In 2015, learners' progress at A level was significantly above the national average overall, and progress at AS level was also above average, although to a lesser extent. However, there was some variation between subjects. Learners made strong progress in photography and history at both A and AS level, and in expressive arts at AS level. Learners' progress in English literature in both year groups and in psychology at AS level was significantly below that of learners nationally.
- In 2015, the school met the 16 to 19 interim minimum standards. The progress of the few disadvantaged learners is in line with that of their peers. Leaders make sure that learners who have not already achieved a good pass in English or mathematics are prepared to retake the examination, but provision is not always closely matched to individuals' needs.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently good or better. Learners benefit from teachers' strong subject knowledge and familiarity with examination requirements. Teachers plan work well to build on individual learners' starting points and often ask penetrating questions to deepen learners' understanding and provoke their curiosity.
- Learners' attitudes to learning are conscientious and appreciative. They collaborate well and contribute thoughtfully to class discussion. In a Year 13 health and social care lesson, learners' engagement was outstanding, reflecting the teacher's clear expectations, precise feedback and their own ambitions for employment or higher education. Nevertheless, on the second day of the inspection, several learners were late to school and leaders have identified attendance in the sixth form as an area for development.
- Leaders in the sixth form have adopted those procedures used in the main school to track learners' progress. Learners who are identified as at risk of not fulfilling their potential meet weekly with sixth form staff. Learners receive sound advice on how to progress to the next stage of their careers. They consider themselves well supported in making applications to university and the school gives equal consideration to those seeking employment or apprenticeship. Almost all students therefore progress to their preferred destinations.
- The school provides a wide range of additional activities. Learners are expected to organise their own work experience and the large majority do so. A high proportion take up extra-curricular opportunities, for example taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. All learners take part in community service.
- Learners benefit from a tutorial programme which addresses a wide range of relevant health, well-being and citizenship topics. However, some told inspectors that a wider awareness of social and cultural issues would increase their confidence in taking their place in wider British society.

School details

Unique reference number	124430
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10009273

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	13–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,053
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	269
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Treney
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Rudge
Telephone number	01889 561820
Website	www.thomasalleyne.org.uk
Email address	officemain@tahs.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	27–28 February 2014

Information about this school

- Thomas Alleyne’s High School is an average-sized secondary school. Pupils join in Year 9.
- The school is a member of the Uttoxeter Pyramid, the organisation which works to coordinate the education provided by the 17 first, middle and secondary schools in the area. Each school retains an independent governing body.
- Almost all pupils come from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium, which is the additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free schools meals and those looked after by the local authority, is high.
- The headteacher took up her post in May 2014.
- At Key Stage 3, one pupil currently receives full-time alternative educational provision at Burton Pupil Referral Unit. Further details of this placement are withheld in the interests of confidentiality.
- The school meets the government’s current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 35 lessons, eight of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. They also carried out a learning walk around the school. Inspectors visited tutor time and an assembly and observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- The inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders, class teachers and governors. They also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with three groups of pupils and one group of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes. Some of these groups were chosen at random. Inspectors spoke with many more pupils informally.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons. They scrutinised several exercise books in more depth. They also looked at information on pupils' current attainment and progress.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of governing body meetings; policies; information and reports provided for parents; and records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team took account of the 98 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire. Inspectors also considered the 59 responses to the questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Patrick Amieli	Ofsted Inspector
Alan Johnson	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Newsome	Ofsted Inspector

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