

# Thamesview School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118879
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	379700
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 September 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Christine Jones HMI

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	757
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<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Gingell
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rhiannon Hughes
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	25–26 February 2009
<b>School address</b>	Thong Lane Gravesend DA12 4LF
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## **Introduction**

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 29 teachers in 29 lessons as well as visiting a further 11 lessons trailing particular students' learning experiences. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and several groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of evidence including the school's evaluation and development plans, information about students' performance and questionnaires completed by staff, students and 322 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The achievement of students, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The quality of teaching and its impact on the progress students make.
- The impact of the vocational centre on the school's curriculum.
- The effectiveness of management arrangements for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and subject development.

## **Information about the school**

Thamesview School is smaller than most secondary schools and is a non-selective high school in an area where the top two fifths of more-able students go to local selective and faith schools.

The majority of students are White British and few speak English as an additional language. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and statements of special educational needs is well above the national average. The school is a designated centre for physically disabled students.

Thamesview School is a Specialist Business and Enterprise College and moved into a new building in September 2010. A purpose built vocational centre opened in 2005. This offers vocational education and training programmes to students from 13 to 19 years old from Thamesview School and other schools in Gravesham and beyond.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

Thamesview is a good school which works hard to ensure all students succeed. They make good progress from starting points that are often very low and reach standards by the end of Year 11 that are average overall. The number of students gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C, including English and mathematics, is improving, and the percentage of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE is now above the national average. All students take a vocational course in line with the school's business and enterprise specialism. The outcomes for these BTEC courses are good. A large majority of students pass their courses with a fifth gaining merit and distinction passes.

The school's strong emphasis on a caring, inclusive ethos results in all students achieving equally well. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the good individual support they receive. Some of these students, particularly those who are part of the physically disabled unit, make outstanding progress.

Students are proud of their school and feel very safe and well cared for. Students are very pleased with the new building and say that it has made a significant difference to their education. They particularly like the way the school is organised into four mixed-age communities as they feel this creates a good learning and social atmosphere. There are very good relationships between staff and students and students behave very well both in and out of lessons. Students reported that 'bullying is very rare and is always taken very seriously and acted on very effectively'. Nearly all parents and carers support the school's high expectations of their children and feel the school is a safe and a happy place.

Students enjoy their education and come to school regularly and on time. Attendance has improved significantly over recent years and is good. Students are enthusiastic learners and make an exceptional contribution to the life of the school and the wider community. This ranges from their eager participation in school drama productions to construction students working on real building projects in local schools. Some students are also actively involved in research projects which look at areas of school life impacting on teaching and learning.

Effective teaching results in good learning in lessons where students are engaged and interested in a wide variety of well-planned activities. Teachers understand their students' needs well and many are very skilful in developing and consolidating

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learning. There are some examples of outstanding teaching where careful planning for a range of different activities ensures the pace of learning is brisk and students are actively involved. Some teachers do not always take sufficient account of what students already know and can do and too much direction by the teacher does not give enough opportunities for students to learn independently. Learning support assistants are not always used to best effect in lessons as their input is not planned in enough detail to effectively support learning. The curriculum makes a good contribution to the students' enjoyment of school. Specialist status and the vocational centre have broadened the range of activities and strengthened provision for vocational courses that meet students' needs.

The school takes excellent care of the students through a total commitment to all aspects of care, guidance and support. Staff make every effort to get to know their students as individuals and work with families and agencies to ensure all students receive support and any help they might need.

The quality of education is improving under good leadership which has been successful in steering the school through the disruption associated with the building of and move into a new school. A new staffing structure has introduced a more rigorous approach to evaluation of the school's work. Staff are rising to the challenge of improving the achievement and well-being of their students. There is good capacity for further improvement as the extended leadership team has an accurate picture and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and knows what has to be done to improve performance.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching quality and continue to raise attainment through:
  - sharing more widely the outstanding practice in the school that encourages students to be active, independent and reflective learners
  - linking learning more closely to students' previous experience and what they already know and understand
  - reviewing the use of support staff during lessons to improve their impact on supporting students' learning and achievement.

## **Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**

**2**

Students come to the school with standards that are generally significantly below average. Inspection evidence found that students are making good progress and achieving well. This was confirmed by the most recent examination results achieved by Year 11 students in 2011 which were markedly better than in previous years.

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Although the numbers of students gaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics remain below the national average, the gap is narrowing. All students gained five A\* to G grade GCSEs, this is more than found nationally. Information on current student performance provided by the school and observations of lessons during the inspection indicate that this improvement is likely to continue in the current Years 10 and 11 and outcomes are predicted to be higher.

Students make good progress in lessons and enjoy learning especially where they are actively involved in relevant and interesting tasks. Students from the physically disabled unit make good and in some cases outstanding progress. They are regarded as essential members of the school community and are supported well by able students with whom they work and play alongside.

Students are well aware of the need to adopt healthy lifestyles and are keen to be involved in the range of sporting activities organised by the school. All students feel very secure and know how to keep themselves and others safe in lessons and around the school. The good curriculum and extensive vocational provision make a good contribution to students’ future economic well-being and basic literacy and numeracy skills are improving.

The different groups of students in the school work well together supported by some friendly inter-community rivalry, especially on sports days. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and most students are maturing into thoughtful, reliable young adults with their own, well-considered opinions.

*These are the grades for pupils’ outcomes*

<b>Pupils’ achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attainment <sup>1</sup>	3
The quality of pupils’ learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils’ behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance <sup>1</sup>	2

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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**The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

**2**

### **How effective is the provision?**

The good relationships students have with their teachers create a positive learning environment. Good lessons are demanding and proceed at a challenging pace that keeps students on their toes and focused on their learning. In the best lessons teachers are skilled in modifying and adapting their teaching to meet changing needs and students are able to learn actively rather than listening to lengthy presentations. Students’ work is marked regularly and gives full feedback to the students on the standard of their work and how it can be improved. Assessment information is used rigorously to track students’ progress and identify underachievement. The progress made by each student is measured every term and the community leadership teams keep a close eye on who is ahead, behind or meeting their target grades in their subjects.

The school is working hard to ensure the curriculum is personalised to each student’s needs. Older students are often grouped by the stage they have reached in their learning rather than by age. These mixed-age classes are helping more students reach their full potential. Vocational provision is extensive and all Key Stage 4 students are offered a range of vocational options. This, linked with the excellent partnerships with local industry and businesses, provides good opportunities for students to develop new skills and grow in self-confidence.

The welfare of students is monitored very carefully. The individual communities are very good at nurturing students and building good relationships between those of different ages. Excellent links and partnerships with external agencies support students who need extra help. Many parents and carers of the students who have just started in Year 7 expressed their appreciation of the successful transition arrangements from primary school. Care for the students and their health and safety is at the forefront of every aspect of the school’s work. However a minority of parents and carers of able-bodied students are causing an unsafe situation in the car park by failing to comply with the school’s directions when bringing their children to school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

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## How effective are leadership and management?

There is a clear drive from the dedicated headteacher and the effective senior team to improve all aspects of the school. The extended and reshaped senior team is providing extra capacity to focus more effectively on improving teaching and learning. The school’s monitoring and evaluation systems have been strengthened and refined and placed at the centre of planning for successful improvement. The headteacher is determined that each teacher has their own personalised professional development pathway supported by coaching and training. Challenging targets are increasingly successful in raising achievement and progress towards meeting those targets, monitored carefully to ensure good value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are secure and no form of discrimination is tolerated with equality of opportunity promoted successfully. This is illustrated by the good or better progress made by students in the physically disabled unit. The school is active in promoting community cohesion within its own community and in the local area. International links are less well developed but improving.

The governing body has a good understanding of its role in supporting and challenging the school and has a thorough grasp of its strengths and areas for improvement. Members of the governing body are reflective and always consider how best they can work with the school and evaluate their input.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

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## **Views of parents and carers**

The response of parents and carers was strongly supportive of the school. The return rate for the questionnaires was high and 90% of the parents and carers who responded were happy overall with their child's experience in the school. A few felt they did not get adequate help from the school to support their children's learning. This view was not supported by other parents and carers or by the inspection evidence. Helping their children to have a healthy lifestyle was also seen as an issue by some parents and carers. This view was supported by a minority of students. They also felt that eating healthily was an issue and the food in the school canteen was very expensive although this is not under the school's control. Parents and carers were overall very appreciative of the efforts made by school staff to meet students' needs.

### Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thamesview School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 322 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 757 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	87	27	207	64	20	6	6	2
The school keeps my child safe	106	33	198	61	13	4	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	89	28	199	62	21	7	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	96	30	183	57	26	8	4	1
The teaching is good at this school	79	25	207	64	19	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	77	24	177	55	47	15	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	51	16	205	64	47	15	1	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	85	26	188	58	18	6	2	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	79	25	198	61	22	7	6	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	81	25	182	57	29	9	11	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	65	20	174	54	36	11	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	86	27	188	58	20	6	4	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	103	32	186	58	15	5	8	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**

30 September 2011

Dear Students



### **Inspection of Thamesview School, Gravesend DA12 4LF**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspection team when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and visiting in your lessons. We were particularly impressed by the pride you take in your new school. This letter is to tell you what we found.

- Thamesview is a good school.
- You achieve well and make good progress especially in your BTEC and GCSE courses.
- You tell us you feel very safe in school and like the new school communities.
- You enjoy your lessons when they are lively and interesting and where you can get really involved in your learning.
- You make an excellent contribution to the school, are keen to take on responsibilities and really enjoy the extra-curricular activities the school provides.
- The school takes outstanding care of you and there is always someone to help if needed.
- Many of your teachers plan lessons that will keep you interested and help you to learn successfully. They are all committed to making sure you are able to fulfil your potential.

We have asked the school to look at the following areas to help you to improve by raising your achievement and improving teaching through:

- making more of your lessons outstanding by keeping you actively involved in your learning
- making sure your lessons follow on from what you have learnt before and what you already know
- looking at the way support staff help you to learn in lessons.

You can all help in this by listening to your teachers and using their advice to improve your work.

We wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Christine Jones  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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