

Thomas's Fulham

Hugon Road, Fulham, London, SW6 3ES

Inspection dates 26–28 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Early years provision	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings

This is an outstanding school because

- Exemplary leadership, particularly of the headteacher, has ensured that achievement, teaching and behaviour are consistently outstanding.
- The proprietors, headteacher and all staff are very effective. They have exceptionally high expectations for pupils. The school's aims for each child to reach their full potential in academic, sporting and artistic achievements are met.
- Pupils make outstanding progress from their starting points. By the end of Year 2, all pupils typically achieve at least the expected Level 2 and many achieve more. By the end of Year 6, all pupils typically achieve at least the expected level and many achieve more.
- More-able pupils achieve particularly well. A third of pupils achieve the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1. A large number achieves the higher levels by the end of Key Stage 2 in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Outstanding provision in the early years ensures that all children make exceptional progress. A range of exciting opportunities ensures that children develop their skills in a fun way.
- Behaviour is always outstanding. This has a positive impact on pupils' progress. Parents are hugely supportive and praise the way the school caters for the various needs of their children.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They are well advised about safety. All pupils become proficient first aiders.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and provides exceptionally well for the various interests of pupils.
- Teaching is outstanding as teachers and teaching assistants have particularly high expectations of pupils. They set challenging targets. Marking and feedback are regular and ensure that pupils are clearly advised of the next step in their learning. Teachers check the progress of pupils very carefully to ensure that they make maximum progress.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements

Information about this inspection

- The school was inspected with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 27 lessons and part lessons, and 14 were observed jointly with senior leaders. In addition, the inspectors heard pupils reading in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Books in every year group were examined, including learning journals in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Meetings were held with two groups of pupils, two of the proprietors and school staff.
- Inspectors took account of 128 responses to the on-line questionnaire, Parent View. There were also discussions with parents at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and analysed a large range of documents and policies, including the school's own data on pupils' current progress, and planning and monitoring documents. Records relating to behaviour, attendance, risk analysis and safeguarding were also examined.
- The views of staff were analysed through the 51 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Bowes, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Zahid Aziz	Additional Inspector
David Smith	Additional Inspector
Velia Hartland	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thomas's Fulham is an independent, co-educational preparatory day school for boys and girls aged between four and 11 years of age. It opened in September 2005.
- It is part of a group of four independent, co-educational preparatory schools and two kindergartens which are owned and operated by Thomas's London Day Schools.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Nearly a quarter of the pupils speak English as an additional language; their first language is usually Spanish or French. Few are at an early stage of learning English.
- No pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school was last inspected in March 2009.
- The school is registered for up to 435 pupils. There are currently 399 pupils on roll.
- Those children who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage attend full time.
- The school uses no off-site provision.
- The school's aims and values are to ensure that each child fulfils his or her potential. Its aim is that every pupil is happy and can be the best that they can be and will have positive attitudes to learning. To 'be kind' is the overarching principle of all at Thomas's School.
- The school has achieved an Artsmark gold status.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure training for teachers continues to have a positive impact on pupils' learning and achievement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Excellent leadership results in outstanding outcomes. The impact of this is that all pupils, whatever their level of ability, achieve particularly well. Leaders have a very positive impact on the quality of teaching and the behaviour of pupils.
- Senior leaders are very aware of the school's strengths. However, they are not complacent and continually strive to make further improvements. For example, the already strong programme of staff training has been improved by a recently introduced Thomas's programme where teachers are offered a bespoke Masters Degree in Education in conjunction with Roehampton University.
- Middle leaders are highly effective and vigilantly scrutinise the progress of pupils in their subjects. The impact is that they react swiftly and organise additional help for any pupil who may not be making maximum progress. Further investigative opportunities have been offered to middle leaders to ensure that they are aware of the latest findings in educational research.
- The school offers an extensive range of subjects which ensures that pupils have a broad and balanced experience. There is a careful balance between academic, sporting and creative opportunities that ensure exceptional development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Exciting trips to foreign countries show pupils the benefit of learning a modern foreign language. Fundamental British values are well promoted and, as a result, all pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. There is an extensive range of over 20 different sports offered to pupils, which include football, hockey, fencing, rugby and swimming.
- Transition for pupils to senior schools is well managed. Parents reported that they appreciated the school's guidance when selecting a senior school for their child. The school encourages pupils to begin to consider their future career and the different skills and attributes they might need.
- There are some links with the local authority. For example, records of achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage were checked in 2011.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Clear measures are in place for the safe recruitment of staff. The premises are clean and well maintained.
- Parents are very impressed with the quality of leadership. They are kept very well informed about how their child is doing, through informal discussions as well as through parents' evenings and reports. During the inspection, many parents wanted to tell inspectors how happy they were with the school. One parent said, 'My child is so happy and has made stunning progress in both his academic work and his sporting skills.' The school ensures that parents receive all necessary statutory information, including the procedure to be followed should there be a complaint. To date, there have been no complaints.
- **The governance of the school:**

The proprietors have ensured that Thomas's Fulham shares the same high expectations, values and ethos as the other Thomas's schools. They are very successful in their aim of ensuring that each pupil fulfils their potential. They are well aware of the high standards that pupils achieve.

They have an excellent knowledge of the school's strengths and have ambitious plans to ensure that it continues to improve.

The proprietors have consistently high expectations of all members of staff and are well aware of the quality of teaching. Targets set for teachers and salary progression are based on the progress of the pupils and a suitable system of appraisal.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Around the school, pupils are always polite and courteous, both to each other as well as to staff and visitors. All parents who responded to Parent View considered that the school makes sure that its pupils are well behaved. Pupils are very effective in influencing the behaviour of others, as they nominate each other for rewards when they see good behaviour.
- Exemplary behaviour in lessons has a positive effect on progress. Pupils enjoy their lessons and display a real delight in their learning.
- Pupils actively support each other to improve. For example, around the walls in classrooms, there are numerous examples of pupils' writing. Pupils give positive and constructive feedback on this work.

- The spiritual development of pupils is outstanding. An extensive range of visitors from different cultures and faiths enables pupils to develop their understanding of the spirituality and lifestyles of others, as well as of themselves. Many pupils have a fascination with the life cycle of creatures. They were entranced by the live webcam of the chicks hatching.
- Moral awareness is carefully developed through both the school and class rules. There are extensive opportunities for pupils to understand more about taking on responsibilities. Pupils report that they enjoy taking on roles such as school, arts and environmental councillors. These roles also develop pupils' confidence. For example, the music councillor recently introduced a recital to over 100 people. Pupils also have an excellent moral understanding of the impact of humans on the environment.
- Pupils' social development is excellent. Their views are listened to and valued. Pupils work and play well together, both within school and local community. For example, pupils took part in an art project with the local maintained primary school.
- Cultural development is exceptional. There is a widespread range of art, music and drama opportunities. In many of the school productions, pupils take on a key role in composing music and directing the performances. Pupils recently took part in a production at the Royal Albert Hall. Strong links exist between the school and Nepal through the CAIRN Trust. Pupils are raising funds to build a school. Some pupils were part of the guard of honour representing Nepal at the Olympic opening ceremony in London.
- Attendance is high and there have been no exclusions.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- All pupils who were spoken to said they feel safe and all parents who responded to Parent View were unanimous that their children feel safe.
- Highly effective arrangements are in place to make sure that pupils and others are kept safe and healthy. All pupils take part in a first aid training course which starts with Reception children learning how to phone the emergency services. This continues through to Year 6 where pupils learn how to conduct cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- Pupils are made clearly aware of other safety issues such as e-safety.
- Pupils understand about the different forms that bullying can take. They do not consider that there are any issues with bullying, but know who to speak to if they are at all concerned.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- Outstanding teaching enables pupils to make exceptional progress. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and challenge pupils by setting ambitious targets. In turn, pupils happily rise to these challenges and try their best.
- Every teacher is very aware of what each child in their class knows and the areas that they find hard. Teachers offer additional support to help with any area that a pupil finds difficult. Pupils say that they like the fact that teachers are always available to talk through any areas that they do not understand.
- In lessons, teachers ensure that pupils understand precisely what they have learnt. Marking and feedback are highly effective. Work is regularly marked, which enables teachers to show pupils what they need to do next to improve. Pupils regularly respond to the marking and comment on how challenging they found a piece of work. This helps the teacher to make sure that the pupil can make maximum progress.
- There is a very positive impact of teaching on reading because teachers and teaching assistants ensure that all pupils develop a love of reading and read regularly in school. Writing progress is excellent because teachers really stretch pupils' imaginations to write extensively for a range of different purposes. Teaching in mathematics is challenging and, as a result, pupils achieve very well.
- Homework is effective because pupils said it was useful in giving them additional practice in subjects. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to do their homework in school after the end of lessons.
- The more able are helped to do as well as they can; for example, they receive intensive additional support that ensures that no moment in lessons is wasted.
- Learning support assistants make an invaluable contribution to the progress of pupils of all abilities.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is well above the national average. This is as a result of pupils making outstanding progress in all year groups.

- Parents were effusive about their children's learning. As one said, 'Each week I am so impressed with what my child can do, she is learning at such a fast rate.'
- The more able achieve particularly well. Around a third of pupils attain the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1. In Year 6, nearly all pupils attain the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make excellent progress because they benefit from carefully tailored support that ensures that their individual abilities are particularly well catered for. Any additional help is reviewed termly to check on its impact and pupils also benefit from a range of external specialists.
- Those pupils who speak English as an additional language make the same excellent progress as their peers.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in reading because they enjoy reading and talking about books. In many classes, pupils have written interesting book reviews which carefully explore the characters and plot.
- There were numerous opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills in other subjects of the curriculum, for example in geography and history. Pupils make rapid progress in mathematics and apply their skills in many subjects of the curriculum, for example in science.
- The school is successful in achieving several academic, sport, music, art and drama scholarships to a variety of independent senior schools.
- Achievement in sport is exceptional. The school is very inclusive and many pupils represent their school in a variety of sports.
- Achievements in the arts are evident throughout the school. Over half of the pupils learn a musical instrument or sing in a choir. In drama, pupils are successful in both performing and preparing for productions. For example, Year 6 made their costumes for the play *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Some pupils are successful in the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations. Achievement in art is strong. Pupils are encouraged to be creative in a variety of media, such as paint, ceramics and textiles. Some pupils have had their work displayed at the Royal College of Art.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities that are generally higher in personal, social and emotional development and lower in understanding the world, shape, space and measure and reading.
- They make exceptional progress and more than the national average achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception. This is because teachers and assistants carefully develop children's understanding through exciting and stimulating activities, both within the classroom and in the outside area. Measuring skills, for example, are developed in a range of fun and enjoyable activities which involve the mud kitchen. Children also benefit from specialist teachers in drama, music, French, sport, dance and computing, and this provision also makes a very positive contribution to progress.
- All parents who were spoken to, as well as those who answered the on-line survey, Parent View, were very complimentary about how well their child had settled into the school. They said staff knew their children exceptionally well. Self-confidence is developed from an early age; for example, Reception children are on the school council. All parents said that behaviour was excellent and that their children all felt safe in school. They said that they liked the way the school teaches them about how their children are learning.
- The success of the early years setting is due to highly effective leadership and management. There are detailed individual assessments of each child's progress. Staff effectively encourage children to use language imaginatively and develop their understanding of English and mathematical skills. For example, the project on 'Superheroes' ensured that children developed their literacy and mathematical skills.
- By the end of Reception, children are all ready to start in Year 1.

What inspection judgements mean

School	
Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Non-association independent school inspection handbook* which is published on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/140053.

School details

Unique reference number	130239
Inspection number	443472
DfE registration number	205/6402

This inspection was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as inserted by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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	Preparatory
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	399
Proprietor	Tobyn and Ben Thomas
Headteacher	Annette Dobson
Date of previous school inspection	24 March 2009
Annual fees (day pupils)	£16,920
Telephone number	020 7751 8200
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