

Thomas Tallis School

Kidbrooke Park Road, Kidbrooke, London, SE3 9PX

Inspection dates 30 April–1 May 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The new headteacher is determined that all students should achieve very well. She and other leaders have a clear vision of how the school should continue to improve. Staff and students are confident in her strong leadership.
- Students make good progress during their time in the school so that they achieve well in their GCSE examinations. They make outstanding progress in English. Students in the two specialist resource bases make good and often outstanding progress because of the very good support that they receive. Provision is good.
- The sixth form is good and improving because it is well led and managed.
- Students behave well and want to learn. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subjects. Teachers work well together to develop their skills. Teaching is typically good.
- The school is a harmonious community where students from different backgrounds get on well together, and are respectful of each other and of adults.
- The curriculum offers a rich range of experiences within and beyond the school day.
- Governors have a very good understanding of the school and provide highly effective support and challenge to ensure it continues to improve.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching and too much variability in the quality of some marking across the school.
- Some students, particularly those who learn more quickly than others, are not challenged enough in some lessons.
- Although attendance is now improving rapidly, there are still some students who miss too much school, and there are some students who arrive at school or at lessons late.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed over 50 part-lessons, 11 jointly with senior staff.
- Inspectors observed behaviour around the school and in the playground, visited the library and scrutinised students' work. They also visited the two specialist resource bases.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, groups of staff, the Chair and members of the Governing Body, and a representative from the local authority. Discussions took place with groups of students, both formally and informally.
- The inspection team scrutinised school documents including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, school and departmental development plans, records of the school's lesson observations, and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- Inspectors considered 61 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), along with the results of a questionnaire which the school had given to parents and carers. Inspectors also analysed 67 completed by staff.

Inspection team

Ann Short, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional Inspector
Avtar Sherri	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
Clifford Walker	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average-sized secondary school with a large sixth form.
- The headteacher took up her post in September 2013.
- The school moved into a new purpose-built building in November 2011.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and those with parents in the armed services, is higher than average.
- Fifty-one Year 7 students are eligible for catch-up funding, which is for students who did not attain Level 4 in English or mathematics at the end of primary school.
- More students than average come from minority ethnic groups. The largest groups of students are White British and African.
- More students than usual speak English as an additional language. A few are in the early stages of learning English.
- The proportion of students who join the school part way through their education is similar to the figures nationally.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- There are two specially resourced bases. Twenty-five students are currently on roll in the deaf support unit and 12 are attached to the support centre for autism and language impairment.
- A very small number of students have short placements at alternative provision when they need particular support. Currently, three students attend Wize Up or Full Circle Education in Greenwich.
- The school has achieved Artsmark gold status.
- The school meets the government floor targets, which set the minimum expectations for students' progress and attainment.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of outstanding teaching by sharing the best practice that exists in the school and ensuring that:
 - marking is consistently good across the school and all teachers give students clear guidance about how to improve their work, and time to respond to their comments
 - all teachers make good use of information about the progress made by students to plan the next stages in their learning
 - all students, including those who learn more quickly than others, are regularly given challenging work so that they make rapid progress
 - time is always well used in lessons to promote rapid learning.
- Improve attendance by reducing the percentage of students who miss too much school, and make sure that all students arrive at school and to lessons in time.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students enter the school with levels of attainment which are just below average in most year groups. They then make good progress, and the proportion of students gaining five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and mathematics is above the national average. Information about the progress of students currently in the school suggests that results will improve further.
- Students consistently make outstanding progress in English. The proportions making expected and more than expected progress are well above average. They are also above average in mathematics.
- The school has rigorous systems to check the progress of students so that any student who is falling behind is quickly given the right additional support.
- The school carefully monitors the progress of students supported through the pupil premium and the funding is well used to provide support for these students. In 2013, there was a difference of about half a grade in achievement in English and mathematics between these students and their classmates. There is still a gap in the percentage achieving five A*-C grades including English and mathematics, but gaps in achievement are rapidly closing across the school in most subjects.
- Many of the Year 7 students supported by the catch-up funding make rapid progress in English and in mathematics so that they develop the skills necessary to help them to succeed.
- Students with physical disabilities and other special educational needs make good progress because of the good support that they are given. Students in the deaf support unit make outstanding progress because of the outstanding provision. Students in the support centre for autism and language impairment also make rapid progress because teachers and other adults plan very carefully to meet the individual learning needs of each student.
- Students who speak English as an additional language make good progress in line with their classmates. Sometimes, they make more rapid progress than their peers.
- The most-able students make good progress in many lessons. In a few lessons, they could be challenged more and given harder work.
- There are good strategies in place to improve students' literacy. Many students regularly visit the library and the number of books being borrowed is increasing. A variety of activities and events help to develop a love of reading.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or for training and employment because they develop good skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics. They receive good advice and guidance about the choices that they are able to make.
- The large sixth form is oversubscribed with many students from other schools applying for places. Achievement in the sixth form is good and continuing to improve rapidly because of good teaching, excellent support and very positive attitudes to learning. Retention from Year 12 to Year 13 has improved and is now good. Large numbers of students go on to universities and art colleges. Students have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of courses so that all, including those continuing to study for GCSE English and mathematics, can make good progress.
- The school enters students early for GCSE mathematics and English, but only when they are ready. If they do not meet their target grades, they are given another opportunity to take the examinations.
- A very few students attend alternative provision when they need particular support to engage them in their learning, but only for short periods of time. These generally achieve as well as they can when they return to school full time.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good. Teachers are well supported to develop their skills.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge. In many lessons, they use a variety of teaching methods and interesting resources which motivate students well. For example, students were able to use technology imaginatively to develop their own research in a Year 8 food technology lesson and a Year 10 geography lesson.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good. Students work well together when they are asked to work in groups and pairs. In a Year 8 English lesson, students made very rapid progress when they were sharing their ideas about Lady Macbeth's feelings.
- Many teachers use questioning well to develop students' thinking, to promote discussion and to check students' understanding. In a Year 12 government and politics lesson, students were asked to think carefully about what they were learning from doing a particular activity. This helped them to identify what they could do better.
- Some examples of the excellent impact of assessment within lessons were seen. In a Year 12 photography class, a spreadsheet assessment system helped the students to reflect in detail about their work so that they made outstanding progress. In a Year 7 English class, students made thoughtful and helpful responses to the written comments of the teacher so that they also made outstanding progress.
- Students are given opportunities to mark their own work and the work of their classmates. They do this well when they are given clear guidance about what they should look for. This helps them to think about their learning.
- The quality of written marking, however, is not consistently good across the school. Not all teachers give clear enough and regular enough advice to students about how to improve their work, and not all encourage the students to respond to their comments.
- Many teachers plan learning well, making good use of the detailed information they have about the progress of individual students to ensure that all can learn rapidly. In a few lessons, time is wasted because some students are not given hard enough work, or do not work quickly enough.
- Additional adults in the classroom make a strong contribution to students' learning.
- The students from the specialist resource bases are very well supported when they are in mainstream classes. Teaching is outstanding in the deaf support unit. In the support centre for autism and language impairment, teaching is never less than good, and is continuing to improve as teachers and other staff work well together to develop the new provision for students with autism.
- Homework is set and is usually appropriate, but occasionally it is not as helpful as it could be in promoting learning.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good with examples of outstanding learning in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They behave well in lessons and their positive attitudes usually contribute to the good progress they make. Very little time is wasted in lessons in managing behaviour.
- In a few lessons where teaching does not fully engage their attention, some students do not work as hard as they could.
- Students behave well around the school, and are polite and respectful to each other and to adults. Students from different backgrounds get on well together. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors. They enjoy coming to school and take good care of their new building.
- The good attitudes to learning of sixth form students make a strong contribution to the positive ethos of the school. They provide good role models for the younger students.
- The school is reviewing its systems for managing behaviour and changes have recently been made to systematically reduce the number of exclusions from school.

- The majority of students, parents and carers, and staff agree that behaviour in the school is good and well managed. Behaviour is not outstanding because there are some staff who indicate that the behaviour of some students with difficult histories sometimes remains a concern.
- Attendance has improved this year and is broadly in line with national figures for secondary schools, but there are still some students who miss too much school. There are also some students who arrive late to school or to lessons. Attendance in the sixth form has improved and is now good.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students report that they feel safe in school, and staff and parents and carers agree that the school is a safe place.
- Students report that there is hardly any bullying in school, and if it does happen, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Students have a good understanding of different types of bullying, such as cyber, homophobic or racist bullying. They report that there is occasionally still some homophobic name-calling but the school has been working hard to ensure that this does not happen. They are taught to keep themselves safe through assemblies and lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school. She is determined to bring about further improvements in achievement for all students and to build a strong, happy and supportive community where all work together for the benefit of every student. She has taken calm but decisive action to improve leadership and has given the school a definite sense of direction after a period of change. Parents and carers, students, staff and governors all express confidence in her leadership and comment on the improvements she has already made.
- She is ably supported by strong leaders at all levels who share her commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Subject leaders work hard to make improvements in their own areas of responsibility.
- Teachers are set challenging targets and are supported to achieve them through training and development. Teachers share ideas and learn from each other. The links between the achievement of students and teachers' pay increases are clear.
- The school makes a rigorous, very detailed and accurate analysis of its own performance, and leaders correctly identify where improvements should be made or new developments put in place. Planning for the future is visionary and exciting, and builds on the strengths of the school.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, meets the needs of the students well and promotes good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. There are many additional activities offered beyond the school day. The school is planning carefully for the future changes arising from national policy.
- The school has a strong focus on the development of the arts and many students take advantage of the wide choice of arts subjects, including in the sixth form. There is a commitment to develop creative learning across and beyond the curriculum. This contributes to the rich range of experiences offered to the students. There is an innovative approach to learning across different subjects through the Tallis Habits of Mind.
- The school works well with parents and carers to engage them in the learning of their children and attendance at parents' evenings and information events is usually high. The vast majority of parents and carers are very happy with the provision for their children in the school. Strategies are being put in place to further involve parents and carers in the future development of the school and to reach out to those parents and carers who find working with the school more difficult.
- Leadership in the sixth form is now very strong and has brought about rapid improvements.
- The resource bases are both exceptionally well led.
- The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is shown by the highly inclusive ethos,

including the inclusion of the students from the two resource bases which are very well led and managed. There are no groups of students who do not perform well.

- The local authority has in the recent past provided strong support for leadership and management, and teaching and learning, and the school has responded well to this support. Now that a permanent headteacher is in post the support is appropriately a much lighter touch.
- Leaders in the school make a strong contribution to local networks.
- Safeguarding meets statutory requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well organised and governors are skilled and highly committed to ensuring that the school continues to improve. They regularly review the impact of their work and undertake training to help them to improve their effectiveness.
- Governors visit the school and receive regular presentations from members of staff including subject leaders. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. They use information about students' achievement to judge how well the school is doing in relation to the national picture and to help them to evaluate the quality of teaching. They ask challenging and appropriate questions and hold the leadership of the school firmly to account. They understand how setting targets for teachers contributes to the improvement of the school, and the links between good teaching and staff salaries.

Governors closely monitor the effective use of resources, including additional funds provided to support particular groups of students.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	100190
Local authority	Greenwich
Inspection number	444363

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,686
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	435
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tim Warner
Headteacher	Carolyn Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	23–24 June 2010
Telephone number	020 8856 0115
Fax number	020 8319 4715
Email address	school@thomastallis.org.uk

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