

Thomas Knyvett College

Stanwell Road, Ashford, Surrey, TW15 3 DU

Inspection dates 3-4 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- In the words of one student, 'This school has improved massively'. Students rightly recognise how much better the college has become in recent years.
- Students now make excellent progress in English and mathematics.
- Teaching is usually good, and there is some outstanding practice. Lessons are well-structured and carefully planned.
- Behaviour has improved since the last inspection. Students have a sense of pride in their college and feel well cared for.
- Leadership in the college is outstanding. The executive, substantive and acting heads have a clear vision and command the respect and support of all staff. An uncompromising drive to raise standards in all areas has driven improvement in all aspects of its work, notably in teaching.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Achievement in some key subjects lags behind the improvements seen in English and mathematics.
- Students' behaviour outside of lessons can sometimes be overly boisterous when they are not supervised or reminded.
- The college does not yet work with the majority of parents closely enough to help them support their child's learning strongly.
- Too few students have developed sufficient confidence in their learning to be able to question and challenge new ideas and knowledge independently.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed a total of 28 lessons, many of them jointly with senior staff.
- Briefer visits were undertaken to registration times and some other lessons. Some of these were with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, subject and house leaders and groups of students from each key stage. There were meetings with representatives from the governing body and a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors evaluated 31 parent responses from Parent View and analysed 45 staff questionnaire responses during the inspection.
- College documents, including minutes of governors' meetings, were scrutinised by the inspection team. Inspectors also looked at students' work and at records of behaviour, attendance and exclusions.

Inspection team

Catherine Anwar, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Alan Taylor-Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Thomas Knyvett College is a smaller-than-average academy within The Howard Partnership Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- At present, the substantive head of school is on secondment as the acting headteacher of another secondary school in the area. An acting head of school has been appointed to work with the executive headteacher who leads The Partnership. An assistant head has become acting deputy head, and an additional assistant headteacher has been appointed.
- An assistant headteacher and four other teachers are supporting a partner primary school and work there for part of the week.
- About two fifths of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils in receipt of free school meals, children looked after by the local authority or whose parents are in the armed services). This is a higher proportion than average.
- Just under a third of students come from a range of minority ethnic groups and about a fifth speak English as an additional language, a higher proportion than usual.
- About one fifth of students have special educational needs supported at school action, and a similar proportion are supported at school action plus or have a statement of special educational needs. These proportions are higher than average.
- The number of students joining and leaving the college other than at the normal times is slightly higher than usual.
- No students attend any training or education away from the college.
- The college exceeds the current government floor standard which sets the minimum standards for achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress in all subjects to match that in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that all teachers steer learning strongly, using a range of strategies to check students' understanding throughout lessons, including probing questioning and further improvements to targeted marking and feedback
 - providing challenges in all lessons that help students to develop a lively and flexible response to problem solving so that they take responsibility for the quality of their work and become confident and resilient learners
 - further developing ways of helping parents to be closely involved in supporting their child's achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Over the last three years students' attainment has improved significantly. It is good and improving in most areas, for all groups. This is the result of several years of successful improvement strategies.
- Students arrive at the college with attainment that is much lower than average. By the time they leave, their examination results are above average. This reflects the rapid progress they make in all year groups.
- Students work hard in most lessons and respond well to the high expectations of their teachers in most subjects.
- Boys make better progress than girls, however both do well. Their good progress is a reflection of the overall quality of teaching and the intensive work carried out by the college with any students identified as falling behind.
- Progress in English and mathematics is outstanding given the starting points of the students in Year 7. This is due to the college's stringent focus on the effective teaching of reading and writing across the college. For example, students are absorbed in paired reading during tutor time, and are eager to take books home for further private reading.
- However, in science, history and drama students have achieved less well over recent years, because of teaching that required improvement, and previously weaker leadership in those areas. These issues are now being addressed, and standards in these subjects are rising steadily.
- There is no appreciable difference in the progress made by students who join the college at times other than Year 7 and those who are here for the full five years. This demonstrates the college's close attention to their individual needs and the effective responses it makes.
- The Year 7 catch-up premium is used well to support a very strong induction programme in Year 7, and some one-to-one support. The college's GOAL (go on and learn) curriculum provides intensive and effective support for students who need it.
- Gaps between the achievement of students eligible for free school meals and that of other students are small, and are reducing as current strategies become embedded. There was no significant difference in the average point scores between those eligible for the pupil premium and others in English GCSE in 2013, and the half grade gap at that time in mathematics is less than in previous years.
- Students who are disabled or have special educational needs make very good progress because of the excellent individual support given to them throughout their time at the college. The learning support department ensures excellent all-round provision including support with anger management, handwriting and phonics (understanding letter sounds) as well as a significant emphasis on the teaching of social skills, reading, writing and mathematics in the GOAL curriculum. Well trained teaching assistants provide close support for students in lessons. Structured play at break times, a student relational worker and assisted homework support all have a very positive impact on these students' progress.
- More able students are currently making better progress than previously, and the college provides opportunities for them to excel. For example, two gifted mathematicians took their GCSEs in Year 9, gaining top grades; they are now studying AS level mathematics courses.
- The college enters some students early for GCSE mathematics and English to ensure that they achieve the highest grade possible and to ensure that some students with problems in their lives beyond school have their achievement recognised. This policy does not limit the achievement of any students because the college ensures that all students continue with English and mathematics until the end of Year 11, continuing to make progress.

The quality of teaching is good

- Where teaching is good or better, lessons are thoughtfully planned with lesson organisation that supports students' learning very effectively. Teachers begin lessons with imaginative activities which fire the enthusiasm of students and enable them to work independently to make good progress. For example, in one science lesson observed, home-made 'vortex cannons' knocked plastic cups over and generated much excitement; this then inspired some good written work.
- In the best lessons, teachers motivate students by creating opportunities for them to work creatively and solve problems together. For example, in a music lesson, students worked in pairs to compose melodies whilst extending their knowledge and understanding of chord sequences. This required students to develop their listening and composition skills, and they rose to the challenge very well. Imaginative strategies such as 'Kung Fu punctuation' in a GOAL lesson used music and actions to teach grammar to less-able students in a memorable and inspiring way. Such exciting ways of learning are not yet common enough across the college.
- Students very quickly develop good skills in reading and writing because teachers focus on this in all subjects. This helps them to do better in all subjects as they move up through the college.
- Inspectors saw examples of some well-directed questioning which makes students think more deeply about ideas and helps them progress more quickly. In mathematics, teachers are precise in their questioning and feedback which ensures that students understand exactly how to improve. In English, teachers use a systematic approach successfully, to teaching basic skills and examination techniques.
- Where teaching is less successful, activities are not always matched closely enough to the individual abilities of the students and questioning does not always probe understanding deeply. Inspectors saw teachers giving the same activities to all students in some classes, meaning that the work was too hard for some and too easy for others.
- Occasionally, activities are unimaginative and the teacher talks too much, giving insufficient opportunities for students to contribute ideas. This limits the students' quality of learning, and can occasionally lead to restless behaviour, or apathy which results in slower progress in some lessons.
- Marking and assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection. The quality ranges from sound to excellent. The most effective marking provides clear, specific guidance for students to improve, and requires them to respond. Time is provided for students to reflect on their work so that they can make really good progress. This does not yet happen in all lessons.
- Students value the recently constructed 4D sensory experience room which further enriches students' cultural experiences. They are very positive about the wide range of trips and visits that are offered by the college, and thoroughly enjoy the sporting provision.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour has improved since the last inspection as a direct result of the new system of sanctions and rewards put in place by the college. These processes are clearly known to the whole community, and are applied consistently. Students usually work hard and are eager to learn.
- Students are pleased with the improvements in behaviour over the last two years, and say that disruption to lessons is very rare. They feel that there is little bullying in the college; when it happens they say it is dealt with consistently and decisively by teachers. Students spoke enthusiastically about their good relationships with staff and felt that 'there is always someone to turn to'. Students were also happy about the rewards that the college offered, and felt that these too had encouraged better behaviour.

- A peer mediation group run by students provides a useful source of help and support with difficult situations. This is associated with a strong and effective system of restorative justice.
- Although attendance has been lower than average in recent years it has now risen to be in line with the national average. This is a result of successful work by the house leaders and assistant headteacher with parents and students. For example, the attendance manager now calls or texts parents at once when their child is absent from school. Some parents are also invited into school to discuss their child's persistent absence.
- The college ensures that students are well-informed about risks and dangers. Assemblies, thought provoking corridor displays and sensitive work in personal, social and health education means that students are knowledgeable about issues such as personal health, discrimination and extremism. They also promote student's spiritual development. The college supports students to develop sensible and tolerant views, reinforcing moral and social values. This work has undoubtedly had a strong influence on the positive relationships evident across the college.
- College leaders have undertaken much successful work with students on the promotion of equality in the college community. Students reported very positive relationships between all groups in the college, enhanced by the way in which tutor groups contain students of all ages. They felt that racism is not tolerated, either by them or by the teachers. Students are proud that homophobia is not tolerated, and that different lifestyle choices are respected. One student remarked, 'We are just a big family, really.'
- Out of lessons students' behaviour is generally good when supervised. When this is not the case, they can occasionally become boisterous. The college is working successfully to address this issue.
- Students feel safe in the college, and this is reflected in the responses to Parent View. Safeguarding procedures are thorough and meet all requirements.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- 'I can honestly say that I enjoy coming to school every day.' This comment from a student is a reflection of the successful journey made by the college over the last few years. This is due to excellent leadership at all levels.
- The college benefits from an inspiring leadership team which, in addition to its core members, also draws on the expertise of leaders from The Howard Partnership to excellent effect. This partnership work empowers leaders and they provide well-focused challenge and support for each other.
- The strength of the college's leadership has been recognised by the local authority; the substantive head of school currently leads another secondary school to support its improvement. A partner primary school also profits from the college's leadership and subject support. The college is truly rooted in its mission to improve educational provision for as many students as possible in the community.
- Leaders have a resolute and well-communicated vision for the college which ensures the support of all staff. They expect, and obtain, total commitment to the welfare and progress of students.
- The senior leaders are acutely well-informed and clear about the remaining areas for improvement. They have begun to address these through appropriately targeted improvement planning at all levels, and they closely monitor the impact of their actions.
- The college sets challenging targets for teachers in partnership with governors. It links the highest expectations to national teaching standards and the sharply identified needs of the college, and holds teachers to account with rigour. Teachers accept their accountability and wholeheartedly support the drive for improvement.
- Leadership of teaching is strong. Planning relies on honest and thorough self-evaluation and training is well matched to identified areas for improvement. For example, the college has recognised the need for more stimulating teaching and has introduced teaching teams which

focus on a key area such as creativity in order to share best practice across all subjects.

- Following the introduction of a rigorous new monitoring process, subject leadership has developed well since the last inspection. Middle leaders have benefited from positive modelling of excellent leadership behaviours and individual training. They are now clear about the lines of accountability in their teams and take full responsibility for their performance, and that of their teams.
- The college has developed a finely tuned and informative system to track students' progress which uses a wide range of indicators. Information is reviewed frequently; this evidence is then used in order to adjust the way in which the college works with individuals, groups and classes.
- The determination to further the life chances of all students in the community is reflected in the way in which the college ran a Year 6 transition project this year, inviting pupils from a partner school to attend Thomas Knyvett College for the last half of the summer term. This helped these students with reading, writing and their readiness for secondary education.
- The college works well with the local authority which has provided appropriate support and resources. For example, local authority officers have worked with senior leaders to further develop skills in lesson observation, and have provided funding for a literacy programme in the college.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governors know the college very well and use their knowledge to good effect. Useful training provided by the college and the local authority means that they can offer constructive challenge to the college's leadership team when discussing the quality of teaching and its impact on progress. Governors visit the college regularly and are clear about the standards of teaching and learning and leadership at all levels. They review the processes of the pay increases given to teachers for good performance thoroughly and well. They are well informed about how different groups of students, and departments, are performing. They also use performance information well, to compare the achievement of students in the college with that in other schools. Governors have a good understanding of how pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up premium is used and what their impact is on achievement. Governors are fully involved in working with the Howard Partnership, and they feel that it has significantly enriched their work. Governors share the college's passion for improvement, and are rightly proud of the contribution they have made to the journey the school has been on.

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	136832
Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	431055

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11-16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	510
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Tina Crombie
Head of School	Mrs Janise Marillat
Executive Headteacher	Mrs Rhona Barnfield
Date of previous school inspection	10-11 May 2012
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