

THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH SCHOOL REVIEW

Review dates Tuesday 4th and Wednesday 5th October 2016

Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behavior and welfare	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth form provision	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good school and close to being outstanding:

- Strong leadership at all levels is embedding a vision that is ambitious and leading to increasing high levels of progress.
- Teaching has many strengths, is increasingly outstanding and characterised by excellent subject knowledge, planning and relationships.
- The ethos is excellent. Pupils feel safe. Their behaviour is excellent and they are increasingly confident and independent learners. The culture is underpinned by a strong climate that promotes spiritual, cultural, social and moral development very effectively.
- Students are confident about their futures. They benefit from good-quality information, advice and guidance reflected in the recent Careers Mark Award.
- The sixth form is good and close to outstanding. The head of sixth is ambitious for his students, has a clear vision and high standards. The students respond in a confident and positive way, reflecting the values and ethos of the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- The quality of teaching is not consistently outstanding across the school. This is because work set by some teachers is not always well matched to the most-able pupils' ability so they are not consistently challenged.
- Some teacher feedback to pupils is not having enough impact, because pupils do not have enough chances to respond to the advice

What does the school need to do to improve further?

Improve teaching further to ensure that all pupils, especially the most able, make good or better progress from their different starting points by ensuring that teaching provides:

- consistently high levels of challenge, appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities.
- remove the inconsistencies in marking and feedback, in particular the way that pupils respond to teachers' advice

Information about this review

- 72 lessons were observed for about 30 minutes each
- Meetings were held with students, senior leaders, middle leaders and teachers.
- A range of documents were scrutinised including self-evaluation forms, improvement plans and data analysis documents
- Student work was sampled in most lessons observed and a selection of work was scrutinized from students covering different year groups and ability levels.

Review team

Howard Lay	CEO SWAT
June McNaughton	Director of Teaching and Learning SWAT
Mark Neild	Director of Achievement and Standards SWAT
Darren Woodward	Director of Primary Learning SWAT
Chris Allen	Director of Science – Samuel Ward Trust
Wayne Lloyd	Head Teacher – Thomas Gainsborough School
Kath Just	Head Teacher – Samuel Ward Academy
Chris Ryall	Assistant Head of Thomas Gainsborough School
Matt Gibson	Deputy Head Teacher of Thomas Gainsborough School
Gail Forster	Assistant Head of Thomas Gainsborough School
Sophie Gynn	Assistant Head of Newmarket Academy
Phil Butterworth	Associate Assistant Head of Samuel Ward Academy

Sam Gallagher Consultant – Samuel Ward Academy Trust

Jenny Carpenter Consultant – Samuel Ward Academy Trust

Information about the school

- The school is a much larger than average secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the student premium (additional government funding) is below average.
- The vast majority of students are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students supported through school action is broadly average.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.
- In September 2013 the school, previously a school for students aged 13 to 18, became a school for students aged 11 to 18 and introduced its first group of Year 7 and Year 8 students.
- In January 2014 the school converted to an Academy, joining the Samuel Ward Academy Trust.
- In September 2015 the old school was replaced by a new build.

Outcomes for pupils are Outstanding

- Student outcomes are good and moving towards outstanding. However the progress of some pupils in some subjects like MFL is uneven. Pupils make significant progress because the school has a culture of high expectations and supports them very well to meet them.
- Outcomes have improved strongly since 2015. Typically, pupils start Year 7 with below average attainment and many make outstanding progress. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, they achieve examination results above the national average in a wide range of subjects including both English and maths.
- The progress of students, as measured by Progress 8, has improved significantly over recent years. In 2016, progress 8 for all students was up to 0.37 from 0.09 in 2015 and the progress of pupil premium students made a dramatic leap up to 0.25 from -0.27 in 2015.
- Progress in examinations of all ability groups is positive, however high attaining pupils make less progress than lower attaining pupils and middle attaining pupils (LAP: 0.48, MAP: 0.45, HAP: 0.07). The school has clear plans in their School Improvement Plan to tackle the relative underperformance of this group.

- Whilst the EBacc success rate was low at 19% (2015 national: 24%) the conversion rates based on prior attainment were identical to the national conversion rates for those students in 2015. The school has a curriculum consisting of three pathways: grammar, stem and broad. The first cohort for this curriculum having started it in their Year 7 are now in Year 9. This pathway system will lend itself to a greater take up of the EBacc suite of qualifications.
- In 2016, the progress of pupil premium students was positive for both those with low and middle prior attainment (LAP: 0.26, MAP: 0.24). The school had no PP students who were classed as HAP in 2016.
- Current progress across all year groups and most curriculum subjects is high with pupils making substantial and sustained gains in their learning. However, due to some inconsistent teaching, some pupils in some classes are not achieving as well as they might. This is not confined to particular groups of pupils, although the most-able pupils are not consistently challenged. For example, in MFL, in Year 11 pupils' learning is more variable; this is often because pupils are not being challenged to apply their prior learning.
- Pupils read widely and often and generally to a high standard. The 100 minute English lesson is having a positive impact encouraging reading every lesson.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment continues to improve and this has helped to drive up pupils' achievement.
- Most teaching is good or outstanding and teaching in the sixth form is always at least good with some that is outstanding. This is the main reason for students' improving progress post-16. However, although the quality of teaching is moving rapidly towards outstanding, it is not yet excellent across the school because there are inconsistencies in a few areas.
- These findings closely match school leaders' own assessment. They reflect their clear understanding of what makes for good teaching and learning and the focused development on areas identified for improvement.
- One of the key reasons for the high standard of teaching is the outstanding ethos for learning in classrooms. Clear routines and outstanding relationships between staff and pupils build high levels of trust and confidence. Consequently they are absorbed in their learning for the full 100 minutes of the lessons and address tasks willingly and with confidence. Pupils in all year groups work very well together to discuss learning topics and are happy to share ideas and opinions.
- Teacher's expectations of their pupils have risen since the previous review. On the whole teachers' planning is good and a strength of their teaching. In the best lessons there is a high

level of challenge, with teachers pitching content to stretch pupils beyond their comfort zone. Some outstanding lessons were observed where teachers were confident to move way from the plan, in order to further challenge pupils and tasks are tailored well to the range of ability. In a Maths lesson outstanding use was made of SOLO to bring about deeper learning.

- Nonetheless the work set by teachers is not consistently well matched to pupils' abilities because the most-able pupils are sometimes not challenged enough. Teachers do not always set work at an appropriate level for the most-able pupils so not all make as much progress as they are capable of. For example, some written work in science shows that pupils are not always required to explain scientific ideas accurately, in depth.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge, set clear objectives and expect pupils to do their best. They apply their expertise to set tasks that are designed to engage and motivate pupils. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson, Harry Potter creatures were the focus for developing understanding of adjectives, similes and metaphors and writing encyclopedia entries.
- Highly effective questioning is a common feature in lessons. Teachers use this strategy to check and challenge pupils' understanding. In a few lessons opportunities are missed in questioning to challenge pupils' thinking by probing or asking for more elaboration and justification in their answers.
- There are many examples of very effective teacher feedback to pupils in line with the school's expectations. In these instances, pupils clearly understand what they have to do improve and act upon this feedback reflectively. In one pupil's book the teacher wrote "Why?" on a piece of work and the pupil responded with an impressive explanation demonstrating deep understanding.
- However, pupils do not always have enough opportunities to respond to the feedback and consequently do not benefit sufficiently from the advice given. These inconsistencies exist across and within departments. Steps have been taken to address this, using examples of feedback with high impact on pupils' progress to model good practice and promoting DIRT time (Dedicated Individual Reflection Time)
- All subjects are supporting improvements in literacy through a strong focus on grammar and correct spelling. Books scrutinised showed a very high level of technical accuracy. The school's work to develop pupils' reading is also effective. Pupils are encouraged to choose demanding books. They were keen to discuss their book choices during their regular reading sessions. For example in Year 8, their choices ranged through contemporary literature such as Jo Jo Moyes and traditional authors such as Charles Dickens.
- In the Access provision, the additional and highly personalised support for vulnerable individuals outside of the classroom is most impressive. Pupils who are disadvantaged or have special educational needs or disability are progressing well due to outstanding teaching well matched to their individual needs.

The personal development, behaviour and welfare of students are outstanding

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- A strong focus on pupils' personal development underpins all aspects of school life. A culture of care, support and respect is nurtured through assemblies, a well-established tutoring system plus a superb Student Support system.
- Pupils are knowledgeable about how to take care of themselves and keep themselves safe. Those interviewed showed an excellent understanding about their health and well-being. Pupils say that the school is a safe place, bullying is very rare and they know whom they can talk to if they have any concerns. Pupils are taught very effectively about keeping safe, including internet safety.
- Leaders for child protection is up to date and takes into account recent guidance on the risks of extremism and radicalisation
- There is a strong emphasis on emotional well-being throughout the school. For example, there is additional support for the increasing complexities some pupils may experience with mental health. This was supported in an assembly that stressed that "Someone in school will always listen to you."
- Pupils have high aspirations for themselves. They are very confident about making decisions for their next steps after leaving the school. Highly effective careers guidance, mentoring and coaching are helping pupils to consider the different career paths open to them. This is reflected in the recent Careers Mark Award. Pupils say they feel well supported in making their option choices and in preparation for the world of work.
- The wider pastoral care for pupils' welfare is a real strength. Staff go the extra mile to ensure that all pupils feel well supported. A personal approach is taken by staff to reduce any barriers that may stand in the way of a pupil's success.
- Pupils are proud of their school and participate well in the extensive range of opportunities to develop academically, socially and personally. They are exceptionally well prepared for the roles they will play as responsible citizens in society, for example through the student parliament. Older pupils say they feel they are treated as adults and expected to take responsibility for their actions.
- Pupils value their education and say that they enjoy school. Very few pupils miss days at school, including in the sixth form. The school carefully monitors the attendance of all groups of pupils and promptly follows up absence. As a result, the number of pupils who are frequently absent is very low.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Both in lessons and when moving around the school, pupils are calm and sensible. Pupils are keen to learn, polite, courteous and friendly towards each other, staff and visitors. There is an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- Pupils' conduct around the school site is exceptional. They move in an orderly and pleasant manner around the school and take exceptional care of the site and its surroundings. A very calm and harmonious atmosphere is felt throughout the school.
- The school is an exceptionally orderly and purposeful community to which students make a significant contribution. This results in an environment where students are able to thrive and make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer them. Consequently, they show a positive attitude to learning and are highly motivated to learn.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leadership by the head teacher, supported by a committed and focused leadership team is excellent. Leaders are ambitious for their students and they respond by working in a positive and focused way and reflect the clearly set out values of the school.
- Leaders have a clearly articulated plan which the staff and community understand and support. This has enabled the school to transform its culture and ethos into a well ordered, supportive and rigorous environment which challenges students and staff to achieve their best. As a result, pupils are increasingly resilient and independent learners.
- Leaders are focused on consistently improving the outcomes of pupils and especially those that are most disadvantaged. They are incisive and determined in their interventions and challenge. As a result progress is rising across the curriculum including in science and MFL that were two areas that required greater support.
- Assessment information is used effectively to inform interventions and support accountability. They also use broader measures such as pupil and parent views to guide action and assess impact and this has resulted in a culture of continuous improvement. Self evaluation is confident and embedded.
- Staff are much more engaged in discussion about teaching and learning. They are interested in their own development and teaching methodologies. Increasingly they feel able to innovate and take risks in the classroom and leaders are encouraging this to become the norm.
- The curriculum supports the progress of all groups of learners very effectively with its grammar, stem and broad streams enabling appropriate pathways through choice. The impact is that all groups are making substantial progress and the take up for EBacc subjects is increasingly fast.

- Middle leaders are more confident and effective at leading teaching and learning and supporting and challenging staff. They use assessment information to guide interventions and inform decisions. They are strong subject specialists and have clarity about what they are trying to achieve.
- Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is strong and there are many opportunities to engage in debating, music and sport and a wide range of cultural visits. There is a strong focus on student leadership, which helps develop them as responsible citizens and is celebrated through assemblies and the awards of ribbons, which is valued by the students.
- Leaders and managers have focused on raising the quality of teaching and learning and this brought about more consistency. However, there are still some inconsistencies in the way that marking and feedback informs progress and in the challenge for the most able but this is improving fast.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are listened to and feel safe. Leaders work effectively with external partners to support pupils who are at risk. Pupils are protected from radicalism and extremism.

The sixth form provision is Good

- The sixth form provision has made significant improvements over the last year when it was graded 'good'. The outcomes in 2016 were up for nearly all measures in 2015, of particular note are the (provisional) value added figures of: A-level 0.32 (up from 0.07) and Vocational 0.66 (up from 0.52).
- Leaders of the sixth form are ambitious in their pursuit of excellence. They have a very clear vision, which they have translated into actions that has developed a culture of independence and challenge. As a result the sixth form has grown substantially in 2016 with twice the number of entries for Year 12 than in the previous year including a significant number from outside of the school (35 students).
- Study programmes are effectively managed so that learners undertake individualised and challenging learning, which builds on their prior attainment and prepares them well for future study or employment. No students leave without education, employment or training opportunities.
- Learners without GCSE grades A*-C in either English or mathematics are involved in a programme of study which leads to success for many.
- Learners' personal, social and employability skills are excellent. There is a programme of outstanding careers guidance, a renewed tutor programme that includes UCAS preparation, excellent EPQ support, and a growing number of Sixth Form specialist teachers.

- The sixth form has a number of innovative programmes of study that foster the school values and support independence. For example 96 students take part in fortnightly mentoring of students lower down the school. This can take the form of in-class support or 1-1 tutoring.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge learners so that they make strong progress across all aspects of their study programmes. Learners who fall behind are supported to succeed and the most able are stretched in most subjects. The school has plans in place to tackle outcomes that were not as strong, for example in Biology.
- Behaviour and attitudes to learning in the sixth form are outstanding. Students feel safe, secure and well cared for. They enjoy excellent relationships with staff. They express confidence in their teachers and welcome the excellent support they receive.