

REPORT: THOMAS GAINSBOROUGH SCHOOL JANUARY 29/30TH 2015

This is a **GOOD** School:

- The Head is an outstanding leader, who along with the Senior Leadership team and Governors has the skills and vision to ensure the school continues to make further improvements.
- Achievement is rising across all year groups. Students make good progress in most subjects including English and Mathematics. Disabled students and those with Special Educational Needs make good progress.
- The gap between pupil premium students and other students is closing rapidly.
- Teaching is good in most subjects.
- Students are proud of their school and behave in courteous and positive way. Relationships between staff and students and students and their peers are excellent.
- The school has a strong set of values which are embedded in the school culture supporting the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.

It is not yet an **OUTSTANDING SCHOOL** because:

- Students make good rather than exceptional progress. This is particularly true of some higher ability students in some subjects, although this is being addressed.
- Not enough teaching is outstanding. This means that progress is not exceptional for students in all subject areas
- Assessment is frequent and accurate but not all pupils respond consistently to the advice and do not therefore make significant and sustained gains in their learning.
- Expectations are high in most lessons but there is a need for greater consistency, especially challenging the higher attaining pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that more is outstanding and fewer lessons require improvement so that more students make exceptional progress by:
 - Ensuring that the checking teachers make of pupil progress during lessons results in adjustments to teaching in order to ensure appropriate challenge particularly of the most able
 - More varied and forensic questioning of students in order to ensure that understanding is deeper and ideas are more fully shaped
 - Ensuring greater consistency in students' understanding of how to improve, particularly through more explicitly tailored objectives.
 - Ensuring that written feedback is more consistent and that it results in students acting on the advice given.

ACHIEVEMENT

- Students make good progress in most subjects and standards are rising to above average. In mathematics the proportion of students that make better than expected progress is above national averages. In English, strong teaching is increasing the proportion making better than expected progress and most make good progress.

- Gaps between different groups of students is closing. This is due to an excellent programme of intervention that supports students with special needs. This is a strength of the school.
- In 2014 the percentage of students achieving 5 or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, was above national figures. The school's prediction of further progress next year is realistic.
- The school makes very good use of data to check progress of students and takes action to support any students at risk of underachievement.
- The progress of those students in receipt of pupil premium funding has improved considerably and standards are rising fast. This is particularly true in English where the review team saw some excellent work.
- The school's approach to teaching literacy and numeracy is carefully planned and contributes significantly to the school's rising standards.
- Achievement is not yet outstanding because the proportion of students achieving the highest grades at GCSE is only as expected in most subjects. The school recognises this and has a strong focus on ensuring greater consistency between subjects.

Quality of Teaching

The majority of teaching is strongly good and sometimes outstanding. There is a small proportion of teaching that requires improvement and no inadequate teaching. The team's views on the strengths and weaknesses of teaching seen during the inspection, match those of senior leaders seen over time in the school.

There is an outstanding ethos for learning. Relationships between staff and students are extremely positive and a major strength of teaching and learning. Students are well known by their teachers. Consequently students are well supported in lessons and in extra-curricular activities to make good progress and achieve well, ensuring a rapid closure of gaps in students' learning. Because of this support, students, including lower attainers, show a high level of resilience in tackling difficulties.

Students' engagement in learning is outstanding. In each subject, all students are fully engaged and respond well to the advice and guidance provided by teachers. Their impressive willingness to learn makes a strong contribution to the quality of teaching because their enthusiasm and their application to tasks enable lessons to proceed briskly, without interruption. Teachers provide many good opportunities for students to work in carefully organised groups. This allows students to be more in charge of the way in which they work and gives them opportunities to demonstrate outstanding collaboration and self regulation

The school's focus on developing scholastic excellence is emerging strongly. There is a whole school push on success, on students bettering themselves and on providing an environment that promotes high achievement. Assemblies celebrate successes and a strong learning culture is supported by outstanding displays that model excellence. Lessons provide an excellent level of challenge in some subjects, such as psychology, but this not always typical. The T1 groups are challenged to make rapid progress in English and science but this is not regularly carried across to other subjects.

Teachers often check on students' learning during lessons and use students' responses as teaching points or to take learning further as appropriate. However, in some lessons teachers do not use this feedback sufficiently to adjust their teaching. Work does not always meet the needs of students of different abilities and in some lessons needs more tailoring to challenge high attainers.

Teachers use a good range of questioning strategies to help students to recall what they have previously learnt and to apply their knowledge and understanding to new or different situations. In

the most effective teaching, questioning also challenges students to think hard and thus increases their progress. Elsewhere, teachers' questioning sometimes does not probe students' understanding deeply so opportunities are missed to expand their ideas.

Good teaching enables students, including those eligible for the pupil premium, to make good progress in their numeracy and literacy skills and especially their reading and writing. Presentation of work in books is of a consistently high standard and technical accuracy is good. Teaching maintains a strong focus on key technical terms and there is an expectation that students will undertake writing in every lesson.

The extent to which teachers develop students' understanding of how to improve is inconsistent. In outstanding lessons, teachers provide progressive objectives to guide students' learning so students are very clear about the purpose of the tasks and how to improve. In other lessons whilst students are clear about how to complete the task, they show less insight about the lesson's intentions and how these will further their progress towards assessment targets or lead to deeper learning.

The quality of the written feedback provided is variable both within and across subjects. Where marking is most effective, staff annotate students' work in a way that indicates what has been done well, what needs to be improved with advice about how improvements can be secured. Excellent examples were seen, for instance in English, of very effective marking, where students were expected to respond to detailed comments on their work. This good practice is, however, not yet universal. Marking in some books seen did not support students' learning equally well as some teachers do not consistently offer sufficient advice on how to improve, nor do they check that students have acted on the guidance given.

The sixth form is well taught and students' progress is carefully monitored. Sixth form work is marked well and students are given helpful written advice on how to improve their work.

Homework is an area for development and the policy is being reviewed. A good quantity is being set but further development is needed to find ways of exploiting home learning.

The behaviour and safety of students is OUTSTANDING

- Students' behaviour outside lessons is impeccable. They are polite towards each other, courteous to visitors and punctual to lessons. They take pride in their school and in their achievements. For example in an assembly celebrating achievement all students were supportive and proud of the success of others.
- Students' behaviour in different classes, year groups and subjects is consistently high and there are very few incidents of low level disruption. Students are becoming more independent in their approach to learning and are increasingly eager to extend the depth of their understanding.
- There is a strong sense of community and trust, bullying is extremely rare and if it does occur is tackled quickly and effectively. All students say that they feel safe and are aware of different forms of bullying including cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying.
- The school has developed some exemplary strategies to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged students, including a student services area that integrates provision into one place and provides easy access for students. These approaches have improved attendance to just above the national average and permanent and fixed term exclusion rates have fallen significantly.

The leadership and management are OUTSTANDING

- The head teacher is highly ambitious with a strong sense of moral purpose and clarity of vision. With his team he has successfully driven improvements in behaviour, the quality of teaching and achievement since the last inspection. Most subject leaders in the school have successfully taken responsibility for leading learning and improving teaching in their departments.
- Leaders are motivated by a deep desire to improve the highest levels of achievement and personal development in the students and base their actions on a precise and accurate analysis which makes interventions effective.
- The school has excellent systems for checking its own effectiveness. It has a clear and realistic picture of the progress it has made since its last inspection and what still needs to be done. Evaluations by the review team and school, leaders of teaching and learning were in line.
- Policies translate the moral purpose and values of the school into a set of clear principles that both students and staff understand. For example the schools approach to pupil leadership, literacy and numeracy and is reflected in most subject areas and lessons.
- There is a relentless focus on improving teaching and learning. Teaching has improved because of the introduction of more effective procedures for monitoring standards, and leaders are quick to challenge teachers who do not teach well enough. The school has an impressive range of training opportunities to help teachers develop their practice. As a result of these approaches teaching is consistently good and improving.
- The school's curriculum promotes a love of learning, achievement and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in most students. Its recent organisation into pathways is encouraging greater challenge in all groups of students and creating excellent opportunities for engagement with local and wider communities.
- Values are explicitly reinforced through a range of de-timetabled days, an impressive programme of careers support and regular competitions for example a recent mastermind event. Awareness of how to be good citizens is also developed through student leadership roles across the school and students were confident about expressing their own opinions and developing their own views.
- The school's actions, for example in its effective deployment of pupil premium money, have secured improvement in the achievement for disadvantaged pupils.
- The school has an open and honest culture which enables it to work with many external providers in improving the achievement and personal development of students. There are strong relationships with external agencies, for example Chaplains visit the school on a weekly basis, business and other community organisations which together support and sustain the development of students. The school has a good relationship with the local authority and its recent decision to join a local trust of schools will sustain its achievements.