

Inspection of Thornden School

Winchester Road, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Hampshire SO53 2DW

Inspection dates: 21 and 22 June 2022

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

There is a welcoming and harmonious atmosphere at Thornden. Pupils are proud to attend this popular school, and they feel safe. They demonstrate the school's values of 'aspire, respect, participation, enjoy'. Pupils can express their views, for example through the school council. This helps them to grow their leadership skills and develop their understanding of community.

Staff know pupils well and have high expectations of them. Pupils rise to this challenge, work hard and achieve very well. Pupils are ambitious for their futures. They value the guidance they receive to help them consider their next steps after school.

Across the school, relationships are strong. Pupils mix together very positively and are polite, respectful and articulate with adults. In lessons, most pupils show a very positive attitude to learning. Pupils say that sometimes, bullying happens. Some pupils feel it is not taken seriously or dealt with quickly enough. Leaders know this and are addressing the issue.

There is a wealth of clubs and activities in sports, the arts and many more, such as the LGBTQ+ club. During the inspection, pupils were enthusiastically rehearsing for their upcoming performance of 'Alice in Wonderland', and the choir was practising a song in perfect harmony. There is an active Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme and frequent opportunities to go on trips, both locally and abroad.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is broad, well planned and ambitious. In key stage 3, the curriculum provides pupils with a strong foundation on which to build. Pupils have a wide range of interesting options to choose from at key stage 4. The proportion of pupils studying GCSEs in the suite of subjects known as the English Baccalaureate is high. The vast majority of pupils study a modern foreign language, and many study two. All pupils study a humanities subject at key stage 4.

Leaders have carefully sequenced learning so that pupils can build on their knowledge successfully over time. Teachers use their strong subject knowledge to help pupils develop their skills and understanding. For example, in a Year 9 English lesson on 'An Inspector Calls', the teacher guided pupils to use their knowledge of etymology to work out the meaning of the word 'hysterical'. However, some teachers do not check carefully enough that pupils have grasped key knowledge and concepts before moving on so that learning is not always securely embedded.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) achieve well. Their needs are carefully identified, and staff make sure they adapt their teaching accordingly. Pupils with SEND are well supported, both academically and emotionally.

Leaders recognise the importance of reading. Year 7 pupils follow a 'read, know, grow' programme which helps them develop a love of reading. All pupils read during tutor time, and the library is a welcoming space. Leaders rightly acknowledge that there is more work to be done to support the needs of the very weakest readers.

Leaders have a strong commitment to produce well-rounded citizens who can assess risk in the world around them. The personal, social, health and economic curriculum is carefully designed to do this. Pupils learn topics such as online safety and consent. Leaders swiftly make changes to the programme to respond to emerging issues in the local area.

Pupils benefit from a well-thought-out careers programme which includes work experience for Year 11 pupils, enterprise day and trips to local colleges. Pupils, especially older ones, feel very well prepared for their next steps in education and employment.

Staff are loyal and committed to the school. They appreciate the consideration that leaders give to their workload and well-being. Parents greatly value the efforts staff go to, to support their children. One parent said: 'The teaching staff are very supportive, helpful and kind.'

Governors and trustees have high expectations of school leaders. They work closely together, know the school well and are focusing on the right things to make the school even better. However, leaders sometimes take too long to implement their plans for improvement, and they do not always check sufficiently well that the actions they have taken are working as intended.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Designated safeguarding leads are well trained and knowledgeable. Leaders ensure that staff, including governors, receive regular training. Updates are often given during the weekly 'teaching and learning Tuesday'. Pupils and staff know how to report concerns and do so promptly. Leaders make appropriate referrals to external agencies when required. Recording systems would benefit from being more streamlined.

Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example when using social media. They learn about healthy relationships in an age-appropriate context. Pupils who feel anxious value the strong support they receive from pastoral staff.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- There is some variance in the way the curriculum is implemented across the school. Leaders know what they want pupils to learn, and in what order, but

sometimes, teachers do not check carefully enough that pupils have grasped key knowledge and skills before moving on. This means that pupils' learning is not always secure. Leaders should ensure that strategies to assess learning are clearly understood by all teachers and embedded consistently across the school.

- Some pupils expressed concern about how bullying is dealt with. They are not always confident that incidents are taken seriously or that leaders' actions are effective. Leaders should evaluate their current approaches and take appropriate action to increase pupils' confidence in raising concerns.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school and have identified the key areas for improvement such as reading, assessment and attention to detail around safeguarding records. However, leaders do not always put their plans into action quickly enough or check the impact of the changes they have made on a routine basis. Leaders should ensure that they drive improvements forward with greater pace and carefully evaluate their actions.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	136715
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10199437
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,493
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Andrew Parr
Head of school	Steven Hicks
Website	www.thornden.hants.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6 and 7 June 2007

Information about this school

- Thornden is larger than the average-size 11 to 16 mixed school.
- The school was previously a stand-alone academy. In 2020, along with two primary schools, the school formed the HISP multi-academy trust.
- The school supports alternative provision for three pupils at two registered education providers.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- At the time of the inspection, Year 11 pupils were only attending school for their GCSE examinations.

- Meetings were held with the head of school, the acting executive headteacher, senior leaders, staff, pupils and a trustee. An inspector had a telephone call with a governor. An inspector had a telephone call with a member of staff at two alternative provisions.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, science, history, modern foreign languages and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited lessons in some other subjects.
- Through discussions with leaders, a governor, a trustee, pupils and staff, inspectors considered how effectively pupils are safeguarded. They also viewed the school's website and policies. They looked at records related to safeguarding, including checks on adults working at the school.
- Inspectors spoke to staff, including early career teachers, about behaviour and their workload in school.
- Inspectors considered the views of pupils and staff through the responses to Ofsted's confidential surveys. The views of parents were considered through the 312 responses to Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

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