

Inspection of Thomas Middlecott Academy

Edinburgh Drive, Kirton, Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 1JS

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

The principal of the school is Lisa Hawkins. The school is part of the David Ross Education Trust (DRET), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Stuart Burns, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by David Ross.

What is it like to attend this school?

This school provides strong pastoral care. Staff know pupils extremely well. Pupils trust that someone will support them when they have worries. The school has improved its morning routines. Pupils genuinely appreciate the positive welcome that they now receive. They value the breakfast club and arrive punctually, ready to learn.

The school fosters a calm atmosphere. Low-level disruption is increasingly rare. Most staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. Where the quality of teaching varies, pupils' behaviour can be less settled. This is improving thanks to the school's new approach to behaviour management.

Staff support pupils who need extra help to regulate their behaviour skilfully, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). School provisions, such as the on-site alternative provision, offer targeted learning support that helps pupils remain in school and to learn. Pupils value this support.

The school has high expectations. Pupils follow an ambitious curriculum, but inconsistent implementation of this means that some pupils do not achieve the outcomes of which they are capable.

Pupils actively participate in trips and enrichment opportunities. They enjoy a broad range of sporting activities. They particularly value the chance to compete in numerous trust-wide events, including the summer cup.

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

The school has experienced significant staffing changes since the previous inspection. Leaders, including trust leaders, have worked hard to address this issue. The situation is improving and staffing is now more stable.

Staff, particularly subject leaders, have benefitted from high-quality professional development provided by the trust. Many staff are subject specialists who show strong enthusiasm for their subjects. However, in a minority of subjects, aspects of subject leadership are less well developed, leading to inconsistencies in the quality of education that some pupils receive.

The curriculum is ambitious and well structured. In some subjects, such as English, staff apply the school's teaching and learning strategies successfully, enabling pupils to learn effectively. Last year's published outcomes indicate that pupils did not achieve as well as they should. Improvements across all aspects of the school's provision mean that currently, pupils are achieving more highly than in the past. However, in some areas, the teaching and learning strategies are not consistently applied. For example, staff do not routinely check pupils' learning or identify gaps in pupils' understanding. This means that some learning gaps continue unaddressed.

The provision and care for pupils with SEND has improved since the previous inspection. Staff identify and address pupils' needs promptly. The curriculum is adapted thoughtfully to ensure that pupils with SEND access ambitious learning. As a result, the achievement of pupils with SEND has improved.

Reading is a school priority. Pupils who struggle to read receive expert support, which helps them to improve quickly. A whole-school reading programme is in place, providing dedicated time for pupils to read. It introduces them to a diverse range of texts and supports their understanding of complex language. However, the programme is taught inconsistently, which limits the impact for some pupils.

Pupils' attendance is improving because of the high-quality work the school carries out. Staff work closely with pupils and their families to overcome any barriers to regular attendance. Nonetheless, some pupils, including some who are disadvantaged, still do not attend as regularly as they should.

Pupils follow a well-planned personal, social and health education curriculum. Through themes such as health and well-being, relationships and living in the wider world, they receive age-appropriate teaching that helps them stay healthy and safe. The school's approach to careers advice and guidance is suitably ambitious and effective. Pupils are developing their character through roles such as 'curriculum ambassadors' and 'change makers'. These pupils positively embody 'The Thomas Middlecott Way'.

The school has strong governance. Statutory obligations are met. Internal support for leaders has proven particularly effective.

Since the last inspection, staff have experienced significant change. They have shown great commitment. They appreciate leaders' efforts to consider their work-life balance. They are determined to do their best for pupils and the community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some subject leaders are new to the school. Some have not benefitted from the training and development needed. This means that aspects of the curriculum are not as scrupulously implemented as they could be. Pupils do not always learn as well as they could. The school and the trust must ensure that subject leadership across all areas of the curriculum is strong. They must ensure that subject leaders receive the guidance and support needed to become highly effective. They must make sure that the quality of the curriculum is consistently strong across all subjects so that pupils' outcomes improve.

- In some subjects, staff do not consistently check pupils' understanding or identify learning gaps as well as they could. This impacts negatively on pupils' achievement. The school should ensure that staff make regular checks to ensure that pupils' prior learning is secure and then built upon skilfully. This will support pupils to acquire the knowledge they need to progress through the curriculum successfully and achieve well.
- The trust's reading programme, 'DRET reads', is taught inconsistently. This means that some pupils do not receive strong support to develop their reading fluency or to extend their knowledge of books. The school and trust should ensure that 'DRET reads' is well taught and that pupils gain meaningful opportunities to read widely and often. They should make sure that the enjoyment and love of reading are further encouraged.
- Although pupils' attendance is improving, some pupils, including the most vulnerable pupils, do not attend school regularly enough. This impacts negatively on their well-being, learning and life chances. The school and trust should continue their work to reduce the number of pupils who are absent from school, including disadvantaged pupils.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141391
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10379586
Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	605
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	David Ross
CEO of the trust	Stuart Burns
Principal	Lisa Hawkins
Website	www.thomasmiddlecott.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	7 and 8 March 2023, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the David Ross Education Trust.
- The principal joined the school in November 2023
- Some pupils receive their education within the alternative provision that is run by the trust. The provision is on the school site.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form

provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school’s education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils’ interests first.
- Inspectors conducted deep dives in these subjects: English, science, mathematics and history. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their wider learning and looked at samples of pupils’ work. Inspectors also spoke with the subject leaders of physical education and modern foreign languages and visited a sample of lessons in these and other subjects within the wider curriculum.
- The lead inspector spoke with representatives of the trust board. She met with the executive headteacher and the trust’s interim director of secondary education.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including education, health and care plans, to evaluate provision for pupils with SEND. They visited pupils receiving their education within the on-site alternative provision. They also visited the Nest and Phoenix provisions.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of pupils’ attendance information. They observed the behaviour of pupils as they arrived at school, in classrooms and at social times.
- The views of staff and pupils who responded to Ofsted’s surveys were considered. Additionally, inspectors reviewed the views of parents through Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, including the free text comments.

Inspection team

Jayne Ashman, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
James Laming	Ofsted Inspector
Julie McBrearty	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Wicken	Ofsted Inspector

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