

The School

Thomas Gainsborough School (TGS) is proud of the educational opportunities that it provides for its students.

The school motto is *'Excellence: for each, for all'* and this encapsulates the values and ethos. It is a school where every single individual matters. The school strives to personalise a young person's education, putting them at the centre of their own learning, to ensure that each student achieves his or her full potential, enjoying an education that focuses on their own individual skills, strengths and aptitudes. Each student has a voice in school – it is their school and their education. Yet each student is also part of a community, locally, nationally and globally. The school want enables students to become outstanding citizens and contribute greatly to the society in which they live.

TGS prides itself on being an open school: one in which parents feel they play a full and proper role in their child's education. The school encourages parents to come into school regularly and welcomes their views, thoughts and opinions: *"We are providing a service, the singularly most important service a family can receive, the education of their children and that education is most successful when the school, the students and their parents form a strong partnership"* (Head Teacher's address TGS website).

In September 2013 the school, previously a school for students aged 13 to 18, became an 11 to 18 school and introduced its first group of Year 7 and Year 8 students.

It converted to an Academy, joining the Samuel Ward Academy Trust, in January 2014. The Trust is a partnership of schools located on the Suffolk, Essex, Cambridgeshire borders. Each school shares the same values, faces similar issues and they are geographically close enough to support and challenge each other.

TGS is located near Sudbury in Suffolk, in a rural setting. The school is a much larger than average secondary school, currently 1,402 students:

- 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, whereas the proportion 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.

Career Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG)

Careers provision is a high priority at Thomas Gainsborough School; the Head Teacher has invested in three members of staff who work together to provide a full and varied careers service for the students. The careers budget of £2000 p.a. ensures that new careers resources are purchased and an independent Careers Adviser engaged.

The school's Careers Adviser is qualified to Level 6 IAG, is a registered CDI Careers professional, she has a management qualification, is qualified to conduct risk assessments for work experience placements and won the CDI National award 'Career Educator of the Year' in 2015; as a careers professional she actively promotes impartiality and is encouraged to do so by the Head Teacher Wayne Lloyd.

The careers team has received in house training to complete work experience processes to a high standard, support students to achieve the Employability award and Excellence ribbons. Stakeholder relationships are nurtured by the careers team; they attend networking events, make regular verbal contact with employers, sending letters of thanks and certificates of appreciation and participation. The team comprises highly skilled administrators and communicators; organisation is important when planning events, recording destinations and keeping records of careers interactions.

TGS offers a wide range of activities which form the school's strategic careers plan which is mapped to the Gatsby Benchmarks. Students have access in the "Careers Hub" via a set of chrome books to online resources such as the National Careers Service, icould, the source and plotr websites.

Information and advice is available from the careers team and teaching staff, students are made aware of this via personalised Year Group leaflets given out to parents/carers on the Academic Review Day in September. Staff are given their own staff training leaflet to enable them to answer careers questions; they are encouraged to refer students to the careers team to answer any other questions. TGS provides numerous connections with employers, further and higher education establishments. The school runs a work experience programme for both Year 10 and 12; students are encouraged to visit the Careers Hub to enquire about such opportunities.

Student engagement in CEIAG/Student voice

Thomas Gainsborough School has introduced a student working party to meet regularly to consult on areas of the careers curriculum and provide feedback to the Head of Careers on how and where provision can be improved. The working party consists of a number of students across years 7-13. Students volunteer to support the Careers department on a weekly basis; they attend as an enrichment activity at the end of school every Monday for 1 hour.

The working party has been in action since the beginning of 2015 when the group was created to establish a student voice for careers education. The group reviews activities planned for group sessions and enrichment days and it offers a student perspective of the activities providing suggestions to improve them.

The working party recently met to consider the improvement of careers communication for events such as employer workshops and personalised employer visits. Students suggested the introduction of careers related activities during tutorial time in the vertical tutor groups to raise awareness. A discussion was held between the working party and the Head of House which resulted in a careers theme introduced in Tutorials in preparation for the next school year in response to student requests.

In September each year students will be recruited again to the working party to ensure that the school gains a wide age range of student voice. The school aims to recruit at least one student from each year group to form the working party each year.

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