

# The King's School Specialising in Mathematics and Computing

Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108275
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wakefield
<b>Inspection number</b>	356336
<b>Inspection dates</b>	17–18 November 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Clive Moss HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1036
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ulric Murray
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Julie Craig
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 February 2008
<b>School address</b>	Mill Hill Lane Pontefract West Yorkshire WF8 4JF
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. They observed 31 lessons taught by 31 different teachers, and also assemblies, tutor groups and other occasions when students were learning. Meetings were held with members of staff and the governing body, and with groups of students. Also, the inspectors spoke with many students informally. They observed the school's work, and looked at analyses of the progress made by students, school monitoring and self-evaluation reports, reports about the school by external agencies, planning and policy documents, including for safeguarding, letters received by the school from external agencies, and records relating to individual students. They looked at 255 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and a further 107 were received after the deadline, questionnaires completed by almost half of the students and others completed by members of staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How well is the school focused on improving students' progress in mathematics?
- How effective are strategies to improve attendance?
- How effectively does the school identify students at risk of underachieving and take action to support them, including ensuring they receive effective teaching in all subjects?

## Information about the school

The school is similar in size to the average secondary school. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is approximately half the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is well-below average. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is below average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average overall, but is average for those with a statement of special educational needs and their needs range from moderate learning to profound and multiple difficulties. The proportion of pupils who enter and leave the school other than at the usual times is average.

The school has achieved many awards for the quality of its work, including the Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold, the International Schools Award, the Healthy Schools standard, the Quality in Study Support Award, a National Standard for Mentoring and Befriending, the Eco Schools Bronze award and the Investors in People standard.

**Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

## Inspection judgements

**Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?**

**2**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**2**

## Main findings

The school provides its students with a good education. Predominantly, the students are polite, courteous and very willing to engage in intelligent conversations. Many express themselves well and demonstrate mature attitudes and ideas.

The teachers work hard to provide interesting lessons, often in cramped classrooms that inhibit more adventurous approaches. The quality of teaching is good overall, but in the lessons seen during the inspection, the work provided for students with lower levels of attainment was often, though not always, less stimulating or challenging than was seen in other lessons. As a result, the students made slower progress. The inspectors saw examples of good assessment and marking of students' work, but the marking in students' books did not always provide clear advice and guidance to students on what specifically had been done well or needed improving.

The students say that they feel nurtured because of the individualised support provided to them. Students from different groups, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, relate well to each other. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities told the inspectors that the school takes considerable care of them and ensures that they are fully a part of the student body. One student, who had joined the school very recently, described how easy it had been to settle in.

The school makes intelligent use of a considerable amount of high-quality data and information about students' attainment and progress in order to bring about improvements. This has led to improvements in provision for individual students and different groups, including, for example, a bespoke curriculum for a group of lower-attaining students in Year 7. Other students told the inspectors that some of the improvements had led to them making better progress in mathematics than previously and their views were confirmed by the school's data on performance in mathematics in 2010. Although the data are still provisional, they suggest that the school is beginning to close the gap in performance between this subject and others. Attendance has also improved and is now high. Self-evaluation is thorough and the senior leaders have a well-informed and accurate view of the performance of the school and the quality of its provision. There are examples of exceptional practice, notably within the English department, but self-evaluation throughout the school is not always sufficiently self-critical and the areas identified for improvement clear enough to ensure the same level of quality or improvement seen in the most successful parts of the school.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching consistently provides more stimulating and challenging work for lower-attaining students.

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- Ensure that teachers' comments when marking students' work focus precisely on what specifically has been done well and how the work could be improved, in relation to the subject being learned.
- Ensure that the best practice seen in self-evaluation is used consistently throughout the school.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

The students make good progress from starting points that are generally slightly above average and there are no significant differences between the progress of different groups, including students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In a mathematics lesson in which the students made exceptional progress, the teacher questioned the students very effectively, targeting individuals, but within a very supportive climate, so that the students were keen to move on to more demanding work and did not want the exercise to stop. Students' attainment is increasingly above average and close to being high.

The students behave well in lessons and around the school, so that, for example, there was no evidence of any jostling when large numbers had to move quickly through narrow doorways and stairwells and students using crutches and wheelchairs were also able to pass safely. Letters to the school from members of the public described the students as 'extremely well behaved' and demonstrating 'great confidence and poise'. There are very few permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions involve a very small minority of students. During the inspection, only one student was sent to the internal isolation room.

The students have good knowledge of how to eat healthily. They respond well to the work undertaken by the school, so that, for example, one student wrote after some investigation work into foodstuffs, 'I was surprised by all the rubbish that was in the burger – I will not be eating any again.' Even so, they do not always act on such knowledge and there was evidence of smoking on the school site, although no students were actually seen doing so.

The students make a highly significant contribution to improving the school, for example, by being closely involved in helping the English department to evaluate its work and design new schemes of work and ways of teaching that capitalise on the students' interests. The students spoke with modest pride about the various leadership roles and positions of responsibility that they undertake, such as head boy and head girl, 'buddies', school 'ambassadors', form captains, librarians, and members of the anti-bullying team. They are very willing to undertake roles with important leadership functions, including taking responsibility for maintaining school-uniform standards, which they approach earnestly. These roles enable the students to become confident young people and contribute significantly to their readiness for the future. Year 11 boys told the inspectors that they were looking forward to the experience of post-16 education. Though complimentary about their school and particularly the careers advice and help with applications that they had been given, they said that five years in school was enough!

The students show good capacity to reflect on social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues. They can confidently explain how they think it is important to be involved in work with organisations such as Age Concern and how taking part in exciting trips, such as one to the Ardèche involving very challenging outward-bound activities, helps them to become more confident. They are also ready to express passionately their personal views on social

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problems in current affairs. Comments about a 'build a buggy' exercise showed the students' appreciation of opportunities to be creative and imaginative.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>2</b>

<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

## How effective is the provision?

The classrooms visited by the inspectors were busy and productive. The teachers created a positive climate for learning to which the students responded well. In the best lessons seen, the teachers used questions to assess students' understanding and prompt more in-depth thinking well. In less successful, though still satisfactory lessons, often involving lower-attaining students, the teachers tended to rely on more traditional approaches to learning; they accepted students' responses more readily and did not always question them further to challenge their thinking. In such lessons, the students made less progress than was seen elsewhere. Individual education plans for the small number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are of good quality, but they are not always followed by the teachers.

There is a broad range of subjects for students to study that meets a wide variety of interests and needs. The large majority of students take part in a wide range of extra-curricular activities that the school offers, from performing at the West Yorkshire Playhouse to simply playing chess in the library at lunchtime. Letters to the school from members of the public described the students as 'well engaged' and participating in events

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'very well'. There are good arrangements to ensure that students using wheelchairs are able to participate in physical education and sport.

The school pays very close attention to the progress made by individual students and is astute in identifying particular issues for those who are underachieving. The school can show that students who attend well make good progress and that those who underachieve often have very poor levels of attendance. Support programmes for students are then highly personalised, using a comprehensive range of activities and interventions, including working with an extensive range of external agencies and business mentors. One parent or carer described the work of the special needs department as 'my lifeline, the service, dedication and attention to detail has been fantastic.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders focus well on identifying areas of underperformance, either in student groups or subject areas, and act with determination to bring about improvements. As a result, attainment has risen since the last inspection, sometimes at a higher rate than nationally, along with the rate at which students make progress. Attendance too has improved. The governing body is involved closely in setting the strategic direction for the school and holds the staff to account well, so that weaker areas of performance are tackled. This has contributed, for example, to the improvements seen in mathematics. The school has used its specialist status effectively to broaden the curriculum and extend its use of partnerships. The school attends to safeguarding matters carefully and the training provided for all the staff is regular and frequent, ensuring that the staff are fully aware of current best practice. The school succeeds, for the most part, in providing an attractive and welcoming environment, using interesting and informative displays throughout, in accommodation which, although kept generally in reasonable repair, is ageing and increasingly unsuitable for modern approaches to learning. The students told the inspectors that all the extra-curricular and enrichment activities available were open to everyone, but the school has yet to analyse fully students' participation in the activities to ensure that no groups are missing out. The school is much more alert to and has tackled variations in the progress made by different groups of students. The school is a highly cohesive community and the curriculum includes many opportunities for the students to learn about different communities, often through well-established partnerships. The school does not, however, analyse or evaluate its contribution to community cohesion systematically.

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*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>2</b>

## Views of parents and carers

The response to the parents and carers questionnaire was well-above average. Most parents and carers are happy with their children's experience at the school. In particular, they think their children are kept safe, that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour well, and that they are kept informed about their children's progress. These views are supported by the inspection evidence. A very small minority thought that the school does not help their children to lead healthy lifestyles and that the school did not take account of their suggestions and concerns. There were very few negative comments about the school and those that were made were individual concerns or issues. The inspectors found that, while the school did many things to promote healthy living, the students did not always act on what they had learned. Parents and carers provided no specific examples of ways in which the school had not taken account of their views, but the inspectors found evidence of good partnerships with parents and carers.



## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The King's School Specialising in Mathematics and Computing to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 362 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1036 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	114	31	218	60	25	7	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	121	33	231	64	9	2	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	100	28	241	67	16	4	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	110	30	223	62	20	6	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	98	27	240	66	12	3	1	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	71	20	239	66	32	9	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	16	232	64	48	13	13	4
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	89	25	227	63	11	3	4	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	93	26	237	65	17	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	94	26	213	59	27	7	10	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	16	235	65	40	11	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	89	25	244	67	13	4	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	124	34	216	60	14	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

### Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.**



19 November 2010

Dear Students

**Inspection of The King's School Specialising in Mathematics and Computing, Pontefract, WF8 4JF**

Thank you for talking to my colleagues and me and making us welcome when we visited your school recently. The inspectors spoke with you in lessons, around the school and in groups, looked at your work, read the results of questionnaires filled in by you and your parents and carers, and spoke with some of your teachers. Here is a summary of the main findings, which I hope will be of interest to you.

- The school provides you with a good education. You make good progress from your starting points when you join the school. Your results in examinations are improving and close to being high compared to other schools nationally.
- Your attendance is high and the school can show that those of you who attend regularly make good progress.
- Most of you behave well. The inspectors found you to be polite and courteous and enjoyed having conversations with you.
- The quality of teaching is good and you have many interesting opportunities to learn.
- The school provides you with outstanding support, particularly those of you who need additional help.

I have asked the headteacher to make further improvements, so that teachers make sure that lessons are challenging for all of you, including those who find learning more difficult, and that, when they mark your work, they always give you clear information about what you have done well and how to improve in that subject. I also want all the departments of the school to be as thorough as the best when evaluating the quality of the school's work.

Many of you, I know, already make a very important contribution to the school and I am sure all of you will want to do everything you can to support the staff in making the school better still.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Clive Moss

Her Majesty's Inspector

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