

The King's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113500
Local Authority	Devon
Inspection number	357371
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1103
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Edward Bloomfield
Headteacher	Faith Kathleen Jarrett
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2007
School address	Barrack Road Ottery St Mary Devon EX11 1RA
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 30 teachers and 30 lessons, and saw parts of tutor time as well as three different house assemblies. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body and groups of students. Inspectors looked at the college's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the college's work, policy documents and students' work. They also scrutinised 311 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers as well as questionnaires completed by staff and a sample of students from each year group.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The extent to which teaching provides both support and challenge for all groups of students.
- The impact of the curriculum and care, guidance and support in promoting high-quality outcomes for all students.
- The contribution to school improvement made by partnerships, the sports specialism and training school status. ♦
- The accuracy and demonstrable impact of self-evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels in driving up outcomes for all groups of learners.
- The quality of provision and leadership and management, and their impact on student outcomes, in the sixth form.

Information about the school

The King's School is larger than most comprehensive schools. The sixth form works in partnership with two local schools and a college of further education. Most students are of White British heritage and the vast majority speak English as their first language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The proportion with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average; their needs include moderate learning difficulties and there are also students with social, emotional and behavioural issues. The proportion of students who have a statement of special educational needs is below that found nationally. The school has held sports specialist status since 2002 and was designated as a Training School in 2007. The school was re-accredited with the Investors in People award in 2010 and holds Healthy School status.

Since the last inspection, there has been significant turnover of staff with the retirement of 20 long-serving members of staff, many of whom held posts of responsibility. In terms of changes to leaders and managers, the school has appointed four new members of the senior leadership team and seven new heads of department.

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?**1****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****1**

Main findings

The King's School is an outstanding school that not only allows students to reach high academic standards, but also to develop into confident, articulate, caring and mature young adults. The school's high-quality curriculum and extensive range of partnerships enable all students to access a wide range of opportunities which enhance their learning and personal development. Consequently, students' outcomes ♦ their achievement and the wider aspects of their personal development ♦ are all outstanding. Attainment is high and all students, including those in the sixth form, make at least good progress in their learning. The school truly lives up to its motto of 'Achievement for All' and equality of opportunity is promoted exceptionally well throughout. The school provides a very high level of care, advice and guidance for groups of students and for individuals by working closely with a range of outside agencies and adopting a flexible and responsive structure to meet the full range of needs in the school. As a result, students with special educational needs and/or disabilities flourish both personally and academically, making outstanding progress. The school is in an excellent position to sustain its strengths and accelerate its improvement because:

- the headteacher provides a clear vision for the school; she drives improvement resolutely and with the best interests of the students in mind
- there is a strong sense of teamwork and collaboration among the excellent team of senior leaders, governors and staff, who share the vision and commitment to driving and improving the achievement of all students
- senior leaders know the many strengths of their school well; these are celebrated appropriately, and there is a passion for continued improvement
- comprehensive systems are in place to support the continuing professional development of all staff and the school's training school status is being used well to drive further improvements in teaching and learning. ♦

Teaching and learning are typically good and some lessons observed were outstanding. The most skilful teachers inspire and challenge students and ensure high levels of student participation by encouraging students to generate exciting questions of their own and develop new lines of enquiry. In these lessons, teachers use assessment information skilfully to tailor learning so that activities consistently challenge learners of all abilities, including the most able. Although developing, this excellent practice is not embedded consistently across the school. There is some variability in marking and assessment. At its best, precise subject-specific marking and dialogue enable students to understand exactly what they need to do to improve. However, opportunities are missed to capitalise on the

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significant potential of students to develop their own learning by, for example, inviting a more sophisticated oral or written response to teachers' feedback.

Thanks to outstanding safeguarding procedures, students feel exceptionally well cared for and extremely safe and secure. A key factor in the school's success is the respect that all members of the community show to each other. This results in a cohesive, purposeful and happy community where behaviour is excellent and there is a shared sense of pride amongst those who work and learn here. The degree of parental satisfaction with the work of the school is very high. One parent summed this up by saying, 'We are delighted with our child's progress and how this school has encouraged and developed her to achieve her best. It's outstanding! The extra-curricular and leadership activities develop confidence and character.' The school's sport specialism and training school status have been utilised effectively to drive forward the work in raising aspirations and securing achievement. Its programmes for developing student leadership through academic, pastoral and sporting opportunities are exceptional. Staff support students in making an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and in the wider community as well as developing skills that are of great value in life beyond school. One student captured the feelings of many others when he said that 'The development of student leadership is as important here as the core curriculum.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure outstanding progress for all students by summer 2013, including those in the sixth form, by driving further improvements in the quality of teaching. This will involve:
 - ensuring that significant elements of highly effective classroom practice are applied consistently and to good effect across all subjects
 - extending the use of effective questioning and dialogue to stimulate more active participation from students in all lessons and a greater capacity for their ideas and contributions to drive the learning forward
 - ensuring that teachers plan learning experiences that provide consistently high levels of challenge for all students, particularly the most able
 - enabling students to understand precisely what the subject-specific actions for improvement are, and how to achieve them, so that teachers can assist students to manage and develop their own learning with more confidence.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**1**

- In the very large majority of lessons observed, students made good progress and achieved well. Behaviour in lessons is a strong factor in the students' learning. They are attentive, engage very positively with the teaching and show ambition and great enjoyment of their learning. This is most evident when work is carefully planned to challenge every student, regardless of ability, and students are given the opportunity to drive the learning forward. When given the opportunity, students excel in debate and group activities.

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- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress because of the high-quality individually tailored programmes which meet effectively the specific learning needs of each child.
- Students enter the school with above average standards and consistent improvement in GCSE examination results over the last three years ensures that attainment is high by the time they leave.
- In the past, a small minority of students in the middle- and in the higher-ability groups have not achieved as well as they could have. Improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, changes to leaders and managers, and a more focused approach to tracking progress have helped to even out the gap in achievement, and all students now make at least good progress.
- The standards seen in lessons and students' books result from early examination entry, and the school's latest analysis of current performance indicate that the progress of all groups continues to accelerate. Consequently, current Key Stage 4 students are well placed to meet their challenging targets.
- Students demonstrate a sophisticated knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle. Many translate this into practice, including healthy eating; students make an important contribution to developing health awareness through their own in-house 'Teen Health' promotional work
- Students gain hugely from teaching children in other schools, sharing their knowledge and passion for learning, for example, in sport, literacy and mathematics. As well as excellent engagement with the local community, they are keen to embrace new challenges, cultures and experiences, and develop wider community cohesion through charitable and expedition work overseas.
- Students' attendance has improved since the last inspection and is now high. Last year, the number of students who left school and who were not in education, employment or training was well below the national average.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
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	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

¹ 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 way in which the school cares for and supports students is an important strength. The introduction of a house system, with students from different year groups mixed together in the same tutor group, has enhanced this area.
- House leaders and pastoral assistants play a pivotal role in ensuring that every student is known so well as an individual and able to achieve. As a result, students display very high levels of trust in the adults around them and appreciate the ways that their successes are celebrated.
- The school works with a wide range of support agencies to respond to individuals' needs, and this liaison work ensures a comprehensive, coherent and integrated approach to the well-being of all students, especially the most vulnerable.
- The curriculum is outstanding because it gives students the opportunity to excel in ways appropriate to their individual strengths and interests. A wide range of partners is used effectively to extend and develop a flexible and increasingly personalised core and extra-curricular offer.
- The curriculum provides memorable experiences and rich opportunities for high-quality learning and wider personal development and well-being. Overseas links and cultural exchanges with Moldova and Ethiopia, and a large number of educational visits in many subjects, are much appreciated by students. ♦

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- Staff in specialist subjects have led imaginative and effective adaptations to the curriculum in the lower school. This has centred on the well-considered application and development of personal, learning and thinking skills, the development of student leadership and greater cross-curricular links.
- At its best, teaching is inspiring. Teachers' knowledge and love of their subject are evident and they obviously enjoy sharing their enthusiasm with students. Inspectors saw some creative and challenging lesson activities skilfully used to draw students into learning and articulate ideas fluently and with confidence.
- In the small minority of lessons where teaching was less effective, there was a tendency for teachers to over-direct proceedings, and too few opportunities for students to generate and explore questions and ideas of their own. Opportunities to stretch and challenge all learners within the lessons were limited, especially for the most able and progress was slowed. ♦
- Inspectors saw exemplary assessment practice in history, politics, personal and social education, and drama where students consistently use teachers' comments to reshape their learning. For example, a GCSE drama lesson made use of a range of assessment promoted by high-quality dialogue with the teacher to empower students to articulate and then apply the key features required when analysing and improving their performance skills. This practice is not consistent across departments.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

- The headteacher has a clear and unwavering vision for the school built around its motto 'Achievement for All' and the fulfilment of every student's potential. ♦
- The clarity of vision is matched by the quality of support given to staff to secure improvements and maintain standards, where they are already outstanding.
- Morale is high and there is an obvious sense of calm purposefulness. Teamwork and collegiality are evident throughout the school and the headteacher's vision is shared and implemented by staff at all levels, governors and students
- Self-evaluation is strong and is based on secure data which results in accurate appraisal of provision and leads to appropriate plans for future development. ♦

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- Senior leaders know exactly what needs to be done to make teaching consistently outstanding so that the progress that students make can be improved further. They recognise that this will involve ensuring that the excellent work of the training school and certain teaching and learning strategies are further developed, and applied consistently across the school.
- The governing body provides enthusiastic and committed support and makes a strong contribution to the strategic direction of the school. The confidence and expertise of the governing body in evaluating the performance of all groups of students in relation to national expectations, and in holding it to account, are growing.
- Governors have been instrumental in ensuring that very high-quality safeguarding practices complement the outstanding care, guidance and support. Every care is taken to ensure that the school is safe and that policies and procedures are rigorous and meticulously maintained.
- The school has successfully established a harmonious and cohesive community, where all members show respect and tolerance for others. It places considerable emphasis on ensuring that all students feel equally valued while maintaining a sense of their individuality and cultural identity.
- There is a highly effective strategy in place for engaging with communities outside of the college, particularly through the work of specialist subjects and the student leadership programme. In addition, students are engaged in working with other schools, both nationally and internationally, in a way which has meaning and broadens their understanding of life beyond their immediate environment.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Sixth form

Sixth formers develop into excellent role models for younger students and make an outstanding contribution in their work with the school and the local community. Retention rates from Year 11 are high and very few students leave at the end of Year 12.

After a dip in the performance of the 2010 cohort, the school has reacted swiftly to strengthen systems for monitoring students and subject performance.

Teaching and assessment are good overall. The school is presently focused on strategies to raise achievement further, including reviewing curriculum pathways and the sharper use of assessment data to ensure that sufficient challenge is provided for all students, across all subjects.

Strong leadership by the head of sixth form and his team has ensured that attainment has returned to above average levels and that students are making good progress overall relative to their starting points. ♦

As in the main school, curriculum and care, guidance and support are outstanding and there are clear indications of strong capacity for sustained improvement in the future.

Students value the excellent range of academic and personal development opportunities available alongside the programmes of support which complement their learning and progress. As a result, students attend regularly, achieve well and are extremely positive about the education they receive. ♦

Students are well advised about higher education, training and employment options. Most progress to higher education, some securing Oxbridge places, and they have high expectations for the future.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

A higher-than-average percentage of parents and carers responded to the Ofsted questionnaire. The very large majority were overwhelmingly positive about almost all aspects of the school and many glowing additional comments were received. A few parents and carers raised concerns about how well the school takes account of their suggestions or concerns as well as the effectiveness with which the school enables them to support their child's learning. Inspectors recognise that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved but consider that the school works hard to support parents and carers, keep them informed and act upon their views. However, because the school is consistently striving for improvement, it has taken on board these suggestions and

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recognises that it needs to persist in finding the most effective ways to engage with all parents and carers. Most parents and carers are happy with their child's experience and enjoyment at the school, and believe that it is led and managed very effectively.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

The inspection team received 311 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1103 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	135	43	159	51	16	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	135	43	164	53	7	2	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	99	32	172	55	27	9	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	110	35	168	54	26	8	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	97	31	188	60	10	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	74	24	176	57	47	15	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	85	27	199	64	18	6	0	0
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)	106	34	172	55	16	5	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	105	34	170	55	25	8	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	89	29	177	57	19	6	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	64	21	176	57	31	10	4	1
The school is led and managed effectively	114	37	171	55	11	4	1	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	134	43	154	50	14	5	1	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.



4 February 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The King's School, Ottery St Mary EX11 1RA

Thank you for your help and for taking the time to talk to us during the recent inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and learning about the work of your school, which we have judged to be outstanding.

The school's inclusive ethos of high aspirations and success for all provides you with a great platform for learning. We were particularly impressed by your behaviour and your very positive attitudes to learning. As a result, relationships between staff and students are superb. You make good academic progress over your time at the school and enjoy your education because of the consistently good teaching. The excellent curriculum provides you with an outstanding range of opportunities, both in and out of the school, and you told us how much you appreciate these. You particularly appreciate the positive benefits that specialist status has brought in terms of helping you to prepare successfully for life beyond school and developing your leadership qualities. The high-quality care, guidance and support also help you to gain outstanding outcomes in all aspects of your personal development.

Although the school is already outstanding, staff are committed to continuing its improvement and are all ambitious to make it even better in the future. The school already knows its strengths and, for areas that are not as strong, there are plans in place to share the best practice more widely. We have asked the school to:

- Improve teaching so that all students make outstanding progress by:
- ensuring that all lessons best meet your needs and provide you with challenging learning activities which engage you more actively in learning
- allowing you enough time to develop and explain your ideas and take greater responsibility for managing and developing your own learning
- ensuring that teachers consistently give you high-quality feedback on your work so that you always know how to improve in each subject.

All of you can certainly help your teachers by responding to their comments and using the feedback that they give, to improve your learning and the quality of your work.

With best wishes for your future happiness and success

Yours sincerely

Karl Sampson

Her Majesty's Inspector

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