

The King John School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122116
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	359173
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	David Martin HMI

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

Type of school	Middle deemed secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	9–13
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ian Teague
Headteacher	John O'Leary
Date of previous school inspection	10 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 24 lessons, seeing 21 different members of staff. Inspectors held meetings with several groups of pupils including the School Council and 'Copse' team. They also met with governors and staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at a range of documentation, including planning documents, data analysis, minutes of meetings and departmental files. They considered the responses from 228 parental questionnaires, and those from pupils and staff.

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

- How well do pupils attain and make progress, particularly in English and mathematics and for pupils in Years 7 and 8?
- How effective are teaching and learning, particularly the use of classroom data, assessment and information and communication technology (ICT)?
- How well do leaders and managers, including the governing body, plan for, deliver, monitor and evaluate improvements to provision and outcomes for pupils?
- How effectively has the school built upon existing strengths in the care for, and personal development of pupils?

Information about the school

The school is a relatively small middle school serving a largely rural community. The vast majority of pupils are White British and the proportion of boys is higher than found nationally. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with statements, is a little below average. The school operates within a voluntary partnership of schools in the area, enabling a more coherent access to wider services.

Following a period of some instability in leadership, the substantive permanent headteacher was appointed in September 2010. There have also been substantial changes to the governing body, including the Chair of the Governing Body.

The school has the Healthy Schools status, Sportsmark and an anti-bullying award.

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

King John is a good school that is continuing to make good progress, building on improvements seen at the last inspection. With the appointment of a permanent headteacher and recent changes to strengthen the governing body, the school has made improvements that demonstrate a good capacity to improve further.

The headteacher and governing body have a clear vision and burning ambition for the school. This is supported by clear, concise planning that informs developments right across the school. The small, talented senior team support the headteacher very effectively, for example in the way that pupil performance and tracking data have developed and the impact made by the teaching and learning group. At the same time there is now rigorous monitoring of progress against identified priorities. As a result, governors and senior staff have a very strong understanding of strengths and areas for further development, reflected in the informative self-evaluation that closely matched the findings of inspectors. However, the roles and responsibilities of middle leaders are not so well developed as those of the senior team and line management is largely informal. At present, the review of school policies is incomplete, particularly relating to those about safeguarding and how the school promotes community cohesion.

The school has maintained a good curriculum, but is enhancing this through partnership working, particularly with the feeder primary and upper schools. Teaching has improved through a strategy that has been successfully focused on improving satisfactory practice to good. There have been strong improvements in the use of pupil data, ICT and assessment in classrooms. Despite this, teaching remains inconsistent and best practice is not shared systematically. During a period of considerable change, the school has maintained strong care and support for pupils. It has added a greater emphasis on academic support to help pupils to achieve their potential.

As a result of this improving provision, pupils attain standards that are significantly higher than those found nationally. This is not only shown in national tests in Year 6, but is sustained in the last two years at the school. From broadly average starting points on entry, this represents good progress, and is seen in both English and mathematics. Pupils' personal development was found to be a strength at the last inspection. This has been built upon further, notably in the excellent work of the school council and 'Copse' group. King John is a very safe, orderly, harmonious community where pupils are considerate, confident and polite to each other, adults and visitors alike.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of teaching and assessment for learning by:

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- strengthening the leadership of teaching at all levels to focus on improving more of the remaining satisfactory teaching to good
- exploring ways to disseminate the outstanding teaching that already exists in the school more widely.
- Make leaders at all levels fully accountable by:
 - making line management systems more formal from September 2011
 - developing the roles, responsibilities and accountability of middle leaders within the revised teaching and learning structure.
- Ensure that the governing body fulfils its role by:
 - completing the review of policies, particularly those relating to keeping pupils safe and promoting community cohesion, by January 2012 making all policies accurate, relevant to the school and with clear links.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

No group of pupils make significantly less progress than their peers. Progress seen in lessons was usually good. Pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities were keen to learn and be involved in lessons where teaching encouraged active participation. In a food technology lesson, for example, pupils took responsibility for their own and others' health and safety and cooperated exceptionally well to plan, create and evaluate their own and each others' work. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress, especially in literacy, due to effective intervention such as the 'reading buddies' programme.

Pupils' personal development is good in all respects. They feel very safe at school and well cared for on a day-to-day basis. Other strengths include the following.

Most pupils show a good degree of self-motivation and will work independently without close supervision.

Attendance and punctuality are good due to improved systems for monitoring and early contact.

Pupils have a good awareness of their own and others' safety, are very considerate towards each other and feel exceptionally safe in school.

Pupils have a strong understanding of issues such as substance abuse and healthy eating through the curriculum.

Pupils understand right and wrong and demonstrate this in their relationships.

Pupils are active and can access a wide range of sporting and artistic activities.

Many pupils commented that shared canteen facilities meant they were not always able to make the healthy choices at lunchtime that they would like.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	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
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

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?

Senior leaders have successfully focused support on teaching that is only satisfactory. This has meant that an increasing proportion of teaching is now good or outstanding. In the better lessons pupils know how well they are doing and are given good feedback to help them to improve further. Planning is thorough and there are clearly defined objectives that pupils are working towards. Nevertheless, recent and significant improvements in practice in terms of ICT, assessment and the use of data are not so evident in satisfactory lessons. In these lessons the lack of pace and challenge can lead to some minor off-task behaviour and lack of motivation.

The curriculum is broad, balanced and well matched to pupils' needs. There is a strong literacy and numeracy focus in most lessons. Transition arrangements with partner schools are good, ensuring continuity of experience, although more firmly established with the upper school than the primary school at present. There is a broad and rich range of enrichment experiences available and participation appears to be good, although this is not sufficiently monitored to ensure that the needs of all pupils are fully catered for.

Pupils are well cared for by adults and relationships are excellent. Good support is provided for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable to overcome barriers to learning. More recently, pupil progress has been tracked on a termly basis by year leaders and monitored against targets. There is a wide range of interventions in place,

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with one-to-one tuition, for example, proving to be very effective. Not all teaching assistants are deployed as effectively as they might be in classrooms to support pupils.

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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The school has been reinvigorated by the vision and energy of the headteacher and the governing body. This vision and the planning processes that underpin it are moving the school forward quickly. The governing body now offers effective challenge to school staff, as well as being supportive. New governors have brought considerable expertise and educational experience to the running of the school. The governing body meets its statutory responsibilities but is behind in its review of policies in order to make sure that they are all up to date and relevant, particularly those that relate to community cohesion and keeping children safe. Nevertheless, day to day arrangements for the safety of pupils are strong and pupils are well supervised. Staff recruitment procedures are robust. The headteacher and governing body are committed to equal opportunities and partnership working for the benefit of all pupils, but are not yet fully evaluating the beneficial impact that these partnerships have. Managers have achieved a balanced budget from a previous deficit through prudent economies and sound financial control. The school has sought innovative ways to communicate with parents and carers, including the use of new technologies. Year leaders are starting to have some impact on raising standards through mentoring. The role of subject leaders is less well defined. Planning for community cohesion has not been a priority for the school, but provision is improving. The headteacher is actively exploring opportunities for pupils to understand the diverse nature of national and international cultures.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

The high response rate to parental questionnaires resulted in many individual comments, with relatively few common themes. Generally, parents and carers are satisfied overall with the experience that children gain whilst at the school. Results compare favourably with those received from all schools. Parents and carers feel strongly that the school keeps their child safe. Inspectors judged that this is a strength. There is some concern about the behaviour of pupils, although comments indicate that this is mainly where teaching is weaker or supply staff cover lessons. Parents and carers also commented on the variation in the quality of teaching. This reflected inspection findings, although behaviour is generally good and often exemplary. A small number of parents and carers raised issues around bullying, but others commented on the effectiveness of school responses when such issues are raised. Parents and carers do not all feel that they receive sufficient support from the school with their children's learning, particularly in the short time available at parents' evenings.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The King John School 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 228 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 428 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	34	130	57	14	6	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	98	43	125	55	1	0	1	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	71	31	137	60	16	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	67	29	130	57	20	9	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	59	26	143	63	14	6	2	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	21	133	58	38	17	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	19	153	67	23	10	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)	65	29	133	58	17	7	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	57	25	141	62	24	11	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	64	28	115	50	22	10	13	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	50	22	135	59	19	8	5	2
The school is led and managed effectively	75	33	127	56	17	7	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	78	34	124	54	19	8	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



17 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The King John School, Thrapston, NN14 4JU

I would like to thank you all for the part that you played in the recent inspection of your school. Inspectors were very impressed by how polite, friendly and helpful you were. I would particularly like to thank everyone who talked to us, in meetings, in class or around the school. Your views are very important and helped us very much with our work. Many of you told us that school lunches could be improved to help you to make healthier choices. The school council is already working with the headteacher to address this issue.

King John is a good school. Here are some of the particularly striking things that we found on our visit.

Your headteacher, governing body, teachers and other adults are committed to making your school the best that it can possibly be.

They care a great deal about you as people and as learners, checking that you are happy, safe and making good progress as you move through the school.

Most of your lessons are enjoyable, well planned and interesting. As a result you work hard, take an active part and learn a great deal.

You are considerate and kind to each other and are willing to take responsibility in the school, for example by participating in the school council and 'Copse' team.

Even good schools can get better! We have asked the adults who run your school to do the following things.

Work with staff to improve some lessons so that as many as possible are as good as the very best.

Make sure that all staff are clear about their role in making your experience of school as good as it can be, in the classroom and beyond.

Once again, I would like to wish you all a very pleasant last few weeks of this term, and best wishes for the future when you move on to your next school. I am sure that you will play your part by continuing to work hard in lessons and enjoy all that the school has to offer.

Yours sincerely

David Martin

Her Majesty's Inspector

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