

The King Edward VI Grammar School, Louth

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120701
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	380091
Inspection dates	21–22 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Trevor Riddiough HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	816
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	208
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Johnson
Headteacher	James Lascelles (Headmaster)
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2006
School address	Edward Street Louth LN11 9LL
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed 36 teachers in 38 lessons, five tutor groups and one whole-school assembly. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders and other staff, groups of students, and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at the tracking of students' progress, performance data, students' work, whole-school and subject development plans, numerous policies, school documents and case studies. Completed questionnaires from 138 students, and 162 parents and carers were received and analysed.

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

- How well have leaders at all levels ensured rigour with evaluations to bring about improvements in the rates of progress that students are making:
 - in the main school, especially in English
 - in the sixth form?
- How well is assessment used to promote the progress that students make?
- To what extent does the curriculum meet the needs of students of all abilities?

Information about the school

King Edward VI Grammar School is smaller in size than other secondary schools with a sixth form. Students come from a wide rural area as well as from Louth itself. A well-below-average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups or who speak English as an additional language is well-below average. The school is a specialist science college. It was recognised as a High Performing Specialist School in May 2007 and has taken on Language College Status as a second specialism. The school has received national recognition in a number of areas of its work notably in its international dimension, healthy schools, sports and in careers advice and guidance. The school operates in an area where there is a system of selection by ability.

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

King Edward VI Grammar School is an outstanding school which has improved significantly since the last inspection. GCSE results are consistently high and A level results have gone up every year over the past five years. Students make at least good and, in some lessons, outstanding progress. Equally importantly, students are very well prepared for further study; not only are their academic standards high, but they also develop as confident articulate individuals ready to take full advantage of opportunities as they arise. Most parents and carers are positive about all aspects of the school, summed up in comments such as, 'delighted with the education offered', 'excellent extra-curricular activities', 'an excellent approach to the development of children', 'immediately welcomed', 'a caring community', 'my child's other home'. Sixth form students describe the school as, 'providing high quality education' and say that they feel able to express their views and beliefs without fear of prejudice.

The care and guidance that students receive is outstanding. The great majority say that they enjoy school, feel safe and that teachers care about them. As a result, students flourish and become mature and purposeful learners. Another aspect of students' outstanding personal development can be seen in the pride they take in non-academic achievements as well as in their school and its heritage, as seen in their exemplary Charter Day celebrations at the local church. Students achieve exceptionally well in many other areas such as in sports, music and in the contribution they make to the school and local community life. Both their involvement and contributions are highly valued by the wider community.

Teaching is outstanding; it is nearly always at least good and is often exceptional. In the best lessons, a brisk pace generates excellent progress. Precise and regular feedback is given to students on how to improve their work both in lessons and in their books. There are excellent examples of supported self-learning. However, in a very small minority of lessons these features are not present and in these lessons progress is slower. Individual talent is fostered very well. For example, students enjoy success in an extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities which include many cultural, sporting and musical opportunities. Participation is high and these activities do much to encourage working closely with others.

A significant strength is the curriculum, which is regularly reviewed to reflect students' interests and aspirations. Opportunities exist for able students to deepen their subject knowledge through additional subjects such as the international GCSE in mathematics and triple sciences. Enrichment and residential courses provide all

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students with rich and highly memorable experiences.

The school's capacity to improve is excellent. It has improved significantly in the past few years. The school knows itself well, is reflective, self critical and strives for even further improvement. Its improvement plan is highly ambitious, yet realistic, with clear targets for the key aspects of its work. The governing body provides unwavering support with strong demands to see action taken, for example when performance in a subject area is not good enough. Its members are highly visible in the school community and listen and respond to student and parental concerns. The headteacher has set high standards and high expectations for all who work at the school and is supported very effectively by his teams of senior and middle leaders to realise these aspirations. This has generated a strong morale, a very positive learning ethos and a firm desire to excel. As a result, the school's vision to 'encourage excellence and nurture talent' has become a reality.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve and extend the outstanding practice in teaching by:
 - ensuring that teaching consistently challenges all groups of learners
 - developing students to be independent learners across all subjects
 - ensuring that the very best assessment practice is consistent throughout the school.

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

Students enter the school with levels of attainment that are well above average. Students in Years 7 to 11 have been selected from the top 25% of the ability range as judged by their performance in the selection test operated by the consortium of Lincolnshire selective schools. Students achieve outstandingly well throughout their time in the school, and as a result overall standards in external tests and examinations are exceptionally high. Since the last inspection, examination results have improved and results compare very favourably with those for other grammar schools. Virtually all students attain more than five GCSE grades at A* to C including English and mathematics, and the percentage at the highest A* and A grades has increased significantly since the last inspection. In 2011, nearly two-thirds of the grades awarded were at this level, and the same proportion of students is on track to achieve these high results again this year. Students of all abilities and ethnic backgrounds, as well as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve exceptionally well because suitable arrangements are in place to ensure that they follow programmes which are closely matched to their needs. There has been some variation in the performance across different subjects, notably in English. Results in 2011 show that the robust action taken by senior leaders to remedy this has been effective. Performance in science, mathematics and modern foreign languages, the school's specialist subjects, is high and it is meeting targets and national expectations for high ability students.

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Learning is good in most lessons and is often outstanding. In many lessons, teachers’ enthusiasm and imaginative strategies ensure that students are excited and engaged in their learning. Lessons are very well structured to help students to develop skills and knowledge while the learning activities that teachers devise are varied and interesting. The atmosphere in lessons is very positive and conducive to high order learning. Students respond well to this with high levels of attendance and eager participation; they work hard and enjoy their schooling. Behaviour is exemplary with students readily taking responsibility for their own behaviour without the need for supervision from adults. Both students and parents and carers agree overwhelmingly that the school keeps students safe. Students report that any concerns can be readily discussed with, and are swiftly followed up by, their teachers. Despite good provision for the promotion of healthy lifestyles, a small minority of students do not feel that the school helps them to be healthy and a few older students make unhealthy choices at lunchtime. Students make an outstanding contribution to school life through, for example, the peer mentoring scheme and prefecting system which gives large numbers the opportunity to support other students in academic and pastoral matters. Testament to this are comments made by newly arrived Year 7 students who confidently reported that they could take any concern they had to any prefect who would immediately deal with it for them. The wider community benefits equally from structured opportunities for community service through, for example, the Combined Cadet Force and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme which attracts well over a third of students in Years 9 to 13.

Students’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They have many opportunities to challenge their own ideas, to understand others’ cultures and have a principled and tolerant approach to those with different opinions and beliefs. As a result, students are very well equipped for the next stage of their lives. With high standards in English and mathematics, strong computer skills coupled with the comprehensive advice and guidance they receive, students move into the next phase of their lives successfully. They leave the school with high aspirations and expect the best for themselves in all that they do.

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	1
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	2

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

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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

How effective is the provision?

Students generally make good, and in many cases, outstanding progress in their learning. In the best lessons, students actively participate in their work, are enthusiastic and make strides in their learning because teachers are good at creating opportunities for them to succeed. For example, in a Year 9 information and communication technology lesson, the teacher consolidated the students' ability to create a range of formulae in spreadsheets using a team challenge. This ensured the active engagement of all, encouraged effective peer support while the competitive element guaranteed that all students made swift progress. Relationships in the classroom are excellent and students feel secure in their lessons and readily ask questions. In many lessons, teachers encourage their students to work independently of them. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and plan lessons well to challenge and target students to do their very best. Assessment is generally used very effectively to support students to improve their work. However, there is some inconsistency across the school. In a small minority of lessons teachers do not generate the pace required for fast rates of progress and not all teachers regularly give students clear guidance about how their work could be improved. In a few lessons, the teaching provides little opportunity for students to develop as independent learners.

A major strength of the curriculum is its flexibility which allows the school to plan and adapt to meet the needs of individual students in order to maximise their achievement. The most able can follow accelerated programmes and take extra qualifications whilst less able students follow a bespoke mentoring programme with targeted help from specialist staff. The comprehensive programme of additional curriculum opportunities, activities and study support significantly enhances students' learning. Students talked enthusiastically about the opportunities they have to experience a wide range of activities ranging from 'survival in the Arctic' science days, 'art meets physics' in ceramics, to theme-based experiences such as in the popular educational visit to America.

The ambitious 'enrichment day' programme gives all students an excellent range of opportunities. Collaborative work with feeder schools gives further breadth to primary school pupils' time in school, for example in the science and language days, and in the gifted and talented summer school, both of which are provided through the school's science specialism. Students really enjoy school because the curriculum is stimulating, interesting and relevant to their individual needs. The wide range of

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learning experiences increases their self-confidence, sense of responsibility and for many provides excellent opportunities for the development of leadership skills.

A striking feature of the strong pastoral support is the attention that is paid by the well-established house, year and tutor systems to monitoring and developing the academic progress of students as well as their personal development. There are extensive systems for monitoring and tracking students' progress. Heads of year have been trained to use data, identify underachievement and provide intervention to support learners. Staff analyse regular assessments, and the outcomes result in personalised targets for students. Any student falling behind in their work is identified in good time for action to be taken. A range of strategies is then offered, including mentor support, subject clinics, on-report and general encouragement. This ensures all students to stay on track and meet their academic and personal targets. Many parents and carers commented particularly on the excellent transition arrangements which ensure that students move smoothly from primary school into Year 7. Both students and their parents and carers also value the extensive advice and careers guidance higher up the school. Students enthuse about the support they receive from sixth form students.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
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?

Since the last inspection, most aspects of provision have improved and have crossed at least one grade boundary. Target setting and monitoring of students' attainment and progress have become more effective. An online tracking system makes it easier for teachers to identify when intervention is needed. Teaching has improved. Expertise within the leadership team has been used to promote high quality learning. Heads of department have been trained to monitor the quality of their provision, diagnose problems and resolve them. They are held accountable for their performance and are well supported in promoting high levels of achievement. The curriculum has been tailored to better meet the needs of all students in the school. Senior leaders have raised expectations and aspirations, and provided the resources and the belief that they can be realised. The relentless focus on raising standards pervades the headteacher's and governing body's actions, evidenced by the improved results since the last inspection. Leaders at all levels have an accurate view of the strengths of the school and are particularly effective at remedying any weaknesses.

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The school does a great deal to stay in touch with parents and carers. They say overwhelmingly that they are kept extremely well informed about their children’s progress and that the school gives them constructive opportunities to influence its work, such as during the recent review of the admissions policy. They acknowledge that their voice is listened to. One parent pointed out to inspectors that, ‘there are great communications between us via the website and text service’. The school is keen to support all students whatever their backgrounds. It monitors closely the progress of all groups to ensure that equality of opportunity is the same for all whatever their backgrounds. As a result, there are no gaps in attainment between any such groups. Any that there were, such as in the performance of boys in the previous year, are quickly resolved. Partnerships are many and contribute exceptionally well to students’ achievements. Work with other local schools has enhanced wider curriculum opportunities; work with higher education bodies has improved the quality of lessons through teacher training programmes; the Mentoring and Be-friending Foundation has promoted peer mentoring in school. The school maintains good links with outside agencies. It takes its safeguarding duties extremely seriously and rigorously checks health and safety requirements and assesses risks assiduously. It is the leader of learning in this area. It has established a highly sophisticated computer monitoring system to support e-safety in school and is now rolling this programme out to other schools. The school is a harmonious community. It has put in place a range of activities to promote the engagement of a range of groups at local, regional and international level, but the school is aware that it has yet to consolidate its work nationally so that students have the opportunity to meet more children from multi-faith schools.

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	1
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

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Sixth form

The success of the sixth form is seen in the high retention rates and the fact that almost all students proceed to university and most gain places at their first choice. All students left school in 2011 with a confirmed place either in employment, education or training.

Over the past five years, performance at A level has steadily improved. In 2010, validated results showed that all students gained a grade A to E, while the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A to B was well above average. Unvalidated results for 2011 show further improvement with one-third of students entered gaining the highest A* to A grades and 87% of entries gaining a grade C or above; both thresholds are well up on 2010. Students in the current Year 13 are on target for similar results in 2012 and inspection findings confirmed the school’s view that standards and the progress that sixth form students make have improved greatly and the upward trend is being maintained. This represents outstanding progress, given the starting points of the students on entering the sixth form.

Most lessons observed in the sixth form were outstanding. They showed challenging use of questions which required students to think, discuss and apply their prior learning to new situations. Teachers’ subject knowledge was generally excellent and used well to ask challenging questions which demanded reasoned answers. Throughout, there were good opportunities for supported self-learning, for example in a Year 12 biology lesson where students researched organelles in cells and then produced high quality presentations about them on the computer.

The sixth form offers a wide range of A level subjects and is always prepared to expand these, if at all possible, should students require a subject not on the options list. Students say that the curriculum matches their needs very well. They say that they are very well supported in their choices for courses at post-16 and beyond.

All leaders, including the head of sixth form and heads of department, have set a vision of high expectations, aiming to be caring and supportive in pursuit of academic excellence and effective personal development. This vision is fully realised. A clear and robust analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in outcomes is used to drive well-focused and targeted improvement strategies, for example in the way that actions have been taken to continue to improve performance at A level.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

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Views of parents and carers

Responses from parents and carers were extremely positive, with the overwhelming majority saying that their children enjoyed school. As one parent said, 'My child really enjoys school and finds the lessons interesting'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The King Edward VI Grammar School, Louth 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 162 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 816 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	88	54	72	44	2	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	91	56	70	43	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	63	39	75	46	9	6	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	42	80	49	5	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	66	41	81	50	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	46	28	92	57	13	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	28	99	61	13	8	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)	73	45	72	44	4	2	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	77	48	77	48	4	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	64	40	88	54	3	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	41	25	95	59	8	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	77	48	72	44	7	4	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	84	52	72	44	0	0	1	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



23 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of The King Edward VI Grammar School, Louth, LN11 9LL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we inspected your school. Your views were very helpful and we enjoyed our discussions with those of you we spoke with in lessons, in meetings and around the school. We particularly enjoyed seeing you all at your 460th Charter Day celebration at your local church.

We found that your school provides you with an outstanding education. You told us that you really enjoy coming to school and that you feel very safe. There are excellent relationships between yourselves and your teachers and you are well supported by them academically in your lessons and personally, especially if you fall behind with your work or have any problems. Your teachers prepare you exceptionally well for academic success and set very high expectations. Your behaviour in classes and towards each other is exemplary. The curriculum provides you with some memorable experiences and there are many opportunities for you to get involved fully in school life. You take on a wide range of activities, including opportunities to show leadership skills and help younger students.

Your school is extremely well led by your headteacher and his team of leaders and managers, who are determined to ensure that it provides the best for every one of you. Even outstanding schools have areas to work on. I have, therefore, asked your headteacher and senior staff to work on helping you to extend your learning to the full and to provide you regularly with good advice and guidance on how to further improve your work. This is an area where you can help by making sure you act upon advice given, especially when your work is marked.

You can be proud to attend an outstanding school where everyone wants the best for you. I wish you all success in the future and hope that you continue to enjoy your time at King Edward VI.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

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