

Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120632
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	380079
Inspection dates	28–29 September 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	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1160
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	288
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Kerr
Headteacher	Graham Burks
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2007
School address	Sandon Road Grantham NG31 9AU
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Forty-five lessons were seen, delivered by 38 different teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and many different groups of students, both formally and informally. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at planning and other documentation at whole-school and departmental level. They scrutinised students' work and school records relating both to students' achievement and their welfare and safety. Inspectors read questionnaire returns from students and staff and analysed 435 parental questionnaire returns.

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

- What are students' attainment and progress in the main school and the sixth form, as measured in recent examination results and as seen in lessons?
- Have strengths in students' personal development across the school been sustained and built upon since the last inspection?
- Is teaching across the school sufficiently strong to maintain an upward trajectory or sustained high standards into the future?
- To what extent are managers at all levels made accountable for driving improvements in the school?

Information about the school

Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School is a selective county grammar school drawing from a large number of feeder schools in the local area, with some students coming from further afield. It is broadly average in size compared to similar schools. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is low. Most students are White British, although a small minority are from a range of other ethnic backgrounds and heritage. Very few students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low and almost none have a statement of special educational needs.

There have been some changes to staffing since the last inspection, particularly at middle leader level. The school has been re-designated as a specialist science and mathematics school, awarded a second specialism in modern foreign languages and recognised as a high achieving specialist school.

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

2

Main findings

Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School, affectionately known to all as KGGS, is an outstanding school. It has a long, proud history; its current achievements match the high ambitions of staff, parents and carers, and of students, past and present.

KGGS is outstanding because it produces successful, confident, mature young women who are well equipped to succeed in the next stages of their education and lives. The academic standards attained by students at all ages are exceptionally high. What is more, although the girls start with high prior attainment, they continue to make good and often excellent progress. This is seen in the great majority of classrooms and is reflected in impressive examination results. What impresses any visitor, however, are the highly developed inter-personal, social and civic skills of the students. They are unfailingly polite, support each other exceptionally well and forge excellent relationships with the adults responsible for their education and care. This means that the school is a highly cohesive community where there is a strong sense of purpose and a positive ethos. Many students willingly accept the many opportunities for leadership and responsibility provided. They become excellent ambassadors for their school in the local area and frequently on the national and international stage.

Since the last inspection, the headteacher, his able senior management team and governing body have relentlessly pursued excellence in all aspects of the school's work. They have identified weaker areas of provision or performance and, through accurate self-evaluation, highly targeted planning, monitoring and evaluation, have made significant improvements. They have increasingly empowered middle leaders to lead developments in their own areas, at the same time making them highly accountable for outcomes. The governing body is well informed, highly supportive and has a range of professional skills. It is increasingly seeking ways to evaluate aspects of the school's work for itself, so that it can comprehensively fulfil its roles in holding leaders to account.

As a result of this outstanding leadership and management, many aspects of the school's provision continue to improve. The outstanding curriculum is extremely well matched to students' preferences and ambitions. It is one of the reasons why examination success is so high. Students also receive outstanding support, both in terms of academic guidance and pastoral care. The intelligent use of data in tracking student performance is a key factor in improved performance. Most teaching is at least good, and much is outstanding and truly inspirational. The school recognises

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that there is still some variation in classroom practice; the quality of teaching and the use of assessment and marking, in a very small minority of lessons, are only satisfactory. Nevertheless, the school is not complacent and, because of the evidence of strong improvement made since the last inspection, has a good capacity to improve even further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Minimise the remaining inconsistencies in teaching in order to ensure good or better student progress in all lessons by:
 - disseminating the excellent classroom practice found in many areas of the school through peer observation and coaching
 - ensuring that subject leaders regularly monitor and evaluate the quality of the constructive feedback given to students through marking and classroom assessment. This should, initially, be evaluated every half term, and include the sampling of students' views. Greater consistency should be evident to students, teachers and managers by the end of the 2011-2012 academic year.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

The girls are inquisitive, interested and involved learners, including the relatively small number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In the great majority of lessons, all students make good and often outstanding progress in the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. This is because, during their time at the school, they are encouraged to question and build on their teachers' and each other's thinking. As seen during the inspection, the mainly good and outstanding teaching helps them to develop strong, independent learning skills, and resilience and perseverance when learning is more challenging. They have excellent key skills and are outstandingly prepared for their future education.

Students feel overwhelmingly safe in school, and their parents and carers' responses support this view. The girls show an exemplary attitude to bullying, a strong awareness and total confidence that any incidents will be quickly and properly dealt with. They are keen to contribute through the many different forms of representation that they are offered. They are exemplary ambassadors for good behaviour, are largely self-managing and prepared to influence and support the behaviour of others. Attendance is high and punctuality is exemplary. Students understand how to keep themselves healthy in all aspects of their lives, and act upon it. They overwhelmingly participate energetically in sports activity and physical education.

The girls are very understanding of those who are different from themselves or who have different needs, as shown in the sensitive support given to wheelchair users.

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Students demonstrate exemplary insight and purposeful understanding of society's shared values and characteristics and are very well prepared for a life within a diverse society at local, regional and international levels. Interactions with students indicate that they have a genuine sense of curiosity, fascination and enquiry. The majority of students are actively involved in campaigns that materially help other people. They have a strong sense of personal endeavour, as exemplified by the quarter of all students being involved at any one time in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. They are keen to reflect on their own and others' experience and lead assemblies and 'thought for the day' activity in tutor time enthusiastically and maturely.

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	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

How effective is the provision?

In many lessons, teachers have a very high level of subject expertise, matched by high levels of challenge and aspirations that are fully embraced by students. Challenging teaching is enhanced by the active engagement and involvement of students in a variety of well-sequenced learning activities. Stimulating, high-order questioning and encouragement enabled students to articulate and build on each other's ideas at the highest level. In a GCSE history lesson, students' thinking skills were of the highest order when they studied photographic sources about the Blitz. Learning was outstanding because of the well-established level of high demand placed upon them, exemplary assessment and excellent questioning on the part of their teacher. In a few lessons, insufficient challenge was presented and students were not enthused because of their lack of engagement. Marking is much improved

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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since the last inspection, but inconsistencies remain around the diagnostic feedback given to help students to improve their work.

The curriculum is outstandingly well matched to the interests, needs and aspirations of the students and contributes strongly to outstanding outcomes. It is substantially enhanced by the specialist subject areas, with, for example, astronomy, forensic science and science in society offered as courses in which students achieve highly. Above all, the school goes to great lengths to ensure that individual choices are met whenever possible, with extra provision made for individuals and groups. There is an exceptional range of enrichment opportunities, including a popular exchange visit to Japan. All students study for the European Computer Driving Licence and there is good provision of information and communication technology across the school.

The school anticipates the pressures facing a high ability, academic, female intake. The systematic monitoring of academic progress and well-being is in place to address this wide level of need and there are highly effective examples of intervention. This feature of care is further confirmed by student interviews and survey data analysed by inspectors and students' outstanding achievement. The school's attention to emotional health, sexual health and other issues specific to gender is also highly effective. Monitoring of the students' uptake of advice following effective signposting is very efficient and they do use the services available to them. Student training opportunities for safe behaviour are extensive and very well received. Systematic responses to cases which involve the most potentially vulnerable students are exemplary. Systematic analysis of attendance patterns has allowed leaders to take well-considered actions that have reduced the absence of a very small number of students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.

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?

Leaders and managers at all levels are properly ambitious in driving improvements in the school under the direction of the headteacher's dedicated and strategic leadership. Teaching has improved, not only through very rigorous monitoring, but through the support of an influential teaching and learning group. Teaching and learning priorities feature prominently in teachers' performance-management targets. The school is aware of strengths and the few remaining weaknesses in provision, but ways to share the best practice in teaching and monitor feedback given through

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marking have not yet been fully embedded.

The school is outward looking and engages in a wide range of partnerships. The impact of these measures on the achievement and well-being of students is carefully monitored and evaluated, making an impressive impact on learning and on students' personal development. Safeguarding is outstanding. A highly systematic approach ensures that all designated leaders and support staff have precise, well-understood roles and carry them out very successfully. Interview procedures are exemplary. As a result, staff are trained and supported without exception, and highly effective risk assessments are in place.

The rich learning opportunities provided are available to all. Adults and students are highly committed to equality of opportunity and there is no discrimination. Decisions affecting them are subject to correct democratic processes and all have a say in what they rightly perceive as 'their' school. The school has completed a most comprehensive audit of its context and provision for promoting community cohesion and has measured its impact carefully. As a result, students are very well prepared to participate in school, local, national and global contexts, gaining an excellent understanding of equality, diversity, cultural and religious aspects relating to their lives.

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	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	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	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The evaluations made about the outcomes, provision and leadership seen for students in the main school apply equally to the sixth form. As the very large majority of girls continue into the sixth form, this phase of their education is seen by staff, parents and carers and students as a continuation of their KGGS experience.

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Almost all complete their sixth form courses and retention rates are excellent.

Attainment in examinations is very high and there is a continuing upward trend over time, with the school enjoying its best-ever results in 2011. From high starting points, students make good progress and the great majority are highly successful in accessing highly competitive higher education courses of their preference. This accelerated progress can be seen in most of the lessons that they enjoy, although some of the inconsistencies noted previously also apply to a small minority of sixth form lessons. However, where teaching is strongest there are excellent opportunities for supported self-learning. This approach promotes independence and is an excellent preparation for the future. The curriculum is exceptionally well tailored to the preferences and aspirations of the students and is enhanced by some successful collaboration with the local boys' grammar school.

The personal development of the students in the sixth form is outstanding. They build further on the opportunities provided earlier in their education by adopting leadership roles and responsibilities easily and naturally. Students make a good contribution to the school and local community, for example acting as reading mentors, collecting money for charity and working in the local community. They are mature, active and thoughtful young adults. Year 7 students commented glowingly on the help and support that they had received from older students, particularly sixth formers, in settling in to the school.

Leaders and managers in the sixth form know the students very well as individuals. Academic and personal needs are very well met because the school tracks their individual progress exceptionally well and is proactive in offering appropriate support and additional help.

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

Views of parents and carers

The response to questionnaires was notably high, with over a third of parents and carers responding. This is around twice the usual response rate for secondary schools. The overall satisfaction ratings, shown in the table that follows, are exceptionally positive. A number of parents and carers could not answer some questions, notably to the one relating to how well the school responds to their concerns. Many of these were from the parents and carers of Year 7 students who are very new to the school. A small minority of parents and carers raised individual concerns which were not endorsed by the majority or by the evidence found by

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inspectors during the two days. A minority of parents and carers were concerned that school lunches could be healthier. Although nutritious, inspectors endorse the view that lunch menus could be more varied. The school is aware of this issue and is already working with the girls, through the school council, in order to make improvements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kesteven and Grantham Girls' 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 435 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1160 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	229	53	192	44	9	2	2	0
The school keeps my child safe	211	49	211	49	5	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	176	40	220	51	19	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	206	47	198	46	12	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	182	42	225	52	12	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	132	30	235	54	42	10	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	92	21	264	61	44	10	6	1
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)	170	39	217	50	12	3	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	181	42	216	50	21	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	139	32	225	52	26	6	4	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	91	21	247	57	26	6	2	0
The school is led and managed effectively	198	46	204	47	9	2	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	230	53	192	44	7	2	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	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.



30 September 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School, Grantham, NG31 9AU

On behalf of my colleagues I would like to thank you, the students at KGGS, for the help that you gave during the recent inspection. I am sure that many of you will wish to read the full report, but this letter gives a brief account of our findings.

KGGS is an outstanding school. You attain exceptionally high standards, making good and often outstanding progress from already high starting points. This is because you have excellent attitudes to your studies and enquiring minds. Good and often outstanding teaching stimulates your curiosity and provides you with independent learning skills. The curriculum is very well matched to your needs and aspirations. You also make excellent progress in personal and social skills. Your behaviour was impeccable during the inspection and you are acutely aware of how to stay safe and healthy. You contribute a great deal to the school community and local, national and international connections that the school makes. In short, you are well provided with the learning and personal skills required to prepare you for the next stage in your education and so that you can contribute as active citizens in the future.

Many of you will be aware that the headteacher and his staff have worked hard to improve your school in recent years. We have asked him to ensure that all teaching is as good as the very best that you receive, by sharing the outstanding classroom practice widely within the school. We also found that you often receive very helpful feedback to help you improve your work, through marking and classroom assessment opportunities. Again, we feel that this could be more consistent; we have asked subject leaders to check that it is always good, and to ask for your opinions and views.

Finally, we would like to thank you again for your contribution to the inspection, seen in the many positive and thoughtful discussions that you had with us. We were very impressed by your mature, helpful manner, the very positive relationships that you enjoy with each other and the adults who work with you. We would like, finally, to wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

David Martin
Her Majesty's Inspector

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