

King James's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	121687
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	380302
Inspection dates	1–2 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Bowles 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	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,696
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	353
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dennis James
Headteacher	Carl Sugden
Date of previous school inspection	6 November 2006
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Introduction

This inspection was carried by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. Teaching and learning in 30 lessons given by 30 teachers were seen and a 'learning walk' with the headteacher looked at a further three lessons. Meetings were held with five groups of pupils, with three governors and a range of staff. Two parents were spoken to by telephone. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including work by students, records relating to safeguarding and other key policies, reviews of outcomes for students and the quality of provision, improvement plans and minutes of meetings. They read 470 parent and carer questionnaires as well as the questionnaires submitted by staff and students.

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

- The quality of learning by different groups (for example, boys in the main part of the school), to determine how far provision is challenging and motivating.
- The effectiveness of marking and other forms of assessment in promoting good progress.
- The impact of care, support and guidance in maximising participation, well-being and achievement.
- How effectively leaders and managers use monitoring information to drive improvement.
- How effectively the school meets its statutory obligations, for example, to promote equality of opportunity.

Information about the school

King James's School is larger than average and, as the only secondary school in Knaresborough, serves both the town and outlying villages. The proportion of students known to be entitled to free school meals is well below average. Almost all students are White British with a small number from other heritages. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average; however, the number of those students with a statement of special educational needs is slightly below average. King James's is a specialist school for technology and business and enterprise and a training 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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

King James's is a good school. Outcomes for students are outstanding. Attendance, attainment and behaviour are of a high standard. Some variation in students' progress is being ironed out. As a result, achievement is now good in most subjects and for all groups, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The improvement in students' progress is recent and yet to be embedded, but is already evident in students' learning. Achievement in the large sixth form is good. For these two reasons, achievement is good rather than outstanding. Most students and parents or carers are positive about the school. It provides outstanding value for money.

The strong and improving outcomes are the result of much determined and effective work to build on the school's good qualities and address weaknesses. As a result, students have a very good choice of courses and enriching extra activities. Their progress is carefully monitored and they receive exceptional care, support and guidance. These fine qualities make sure that all groups of students make the most of their opportunities in this vibrant school. The quality of teaching is generally good. Much teaching is characterised by teachers' use of their strong understanding of their subjects and their students to make lessons purposeful, exciting and illuminating. However, a proportion is no better than satisfactory because it misses some opportunities to maximise students' progress. This happens when teachers do not closely match the challenge of work to what the student has shown he or she can already do. Some teachers do too much of the talking, leaving students too passive; some do not check students' progress closely enough within the lesson or give feedback which helps students to improve.

The school's leaders and managers set high expectations and have a good understanding of how the school can do better. Their determined work to improve the use of information to evaluate the school, to increase monitoring and to focus improvement-planning has had a good effect. The steps taken have reduced variation between subjects and significantly boosted the progress made by boys. As a result, achievement has improved and is now good. The school clearly has good capacity to sustain improvement. It is not outstanding because leaders and managers have not used the most stretching benchmarks to compare the school's performance. In consequence, inspection evidence did not support the school's self-evaluation in some respects. While progress is rigorously and effectively monitored,

the monitoring of the quality of some aspects of teaching and assessment has not been highly effective in producing consistently good or better quality.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the pace of learning by:
 - using teachers' awareness of students' understanding to focus activities precisely on what different students need to learn
 - involving students more actively in their learning and encouraging greater independence
 - ensuring that constructive feedback has a positive impact on students' work.
- Drive up the quality of teaching to be outstanding by:
 - using the most challenging benchmarks to evaluate and set targets
 - monitoring the quality of provision as rigorously as students' progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Attainment is above average in English, mathematics, science and the majority of subjects, notably art and design and design technology, the last being one of the school's specialist areas. On key measures, including the proportion of students who attain five or more good GCSEs including English and mathematics, attainment continues to climb, at least keeping pace with national improvements. Other than in modern foreign languages, attainment compares well with other schools for all groups. Students have good basic skills and the understanding and attitudes needed for the world of work. A high proportion continues in education or training after the age of sixteen.

Students' progress has recently improved and is now good. In recent years, students have made the expected amount of progress from starting points which are generally above average, although boys have made below average progress. However, persistent interventions and improvements to provision have turned this round. Provisional results for 2011 and accurate tracking of students' current progress clearly indicate improvement for both boys and girls. The quality of learning observed was good overall. Progress was good in around two thirds of lessons seen during the inspection, and outstanding in a few examples. Students' very positive attitudes make a strong contribution to learning, as their exemplary behaviour helps teachers teach well. Both boys and girls are prepared to acknowledge their weaknesses and play an active part in work and evaluating learning. Learning was slightly stronger in Years 10 and 11 because students had a better understanding of how to improve their work. In a small minority of cases, learning was no better than satisfactory, and, while students knew what their target levels or grades were, they were not always clear about how they could improve. This reflected some less effective teaching, marking or feedback.

Students feel very safe in school because of good supervision and the confident, trusting ethos. They understand the school's clear expectations well and take pains, for example, to be punctual. The behaviour observed around the school was

frequently outstanding. The very great majority behaves considerately and the need for exclusion has reduced. Many students make the most of their good opportunities to live a healthy lifestyle: take-up of school meals and participation in sport are above average. Students act with confidence and carry responsibilities well. They are significantly involved in making decisions about the school. The contribution made by all groups to the wider community is exceptionally positive. Students were outstandingly reflective in some lessons. Their moral and social development is well served by the rich experiences provided by the school. Students are open-minded, and conscious of their part in combating unfair discrimination. However, they have limited experience of the similarities and differences of other cultures in the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	1
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	
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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:	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good overall, but with variation. In lessons where students make good or better progress, expectations are high and teachers provide a range of challenging tasks that give responsibility for learning to students and proceed at a lively pace. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and understand well how students learn. Students are very clear about what it is they are learning and why. Work set takes good account of available assessment information about students' progress and is suitably matched to their differing needs. As a result, there is a positive level of challenge and students are confident and independent learners. These more successful lessons clearly illustrate the positive impact of the school's strategies to strengthen teaching and to improve the use of assessment for learning. Not all lessons are as effective. Sometimes, teachers talk for too long and make too little demand of students. Activities are more mundane, often teacher-dominated and do little to capture students' enthusiasm for learning. Too frequently this minority of lessons takes a 'one size fits all' approach so that work is not well matched to students' different levels. As a result more-able students who could achieve more are not sufficiently challenged. At its best, marking gives helpfully diagnostic feedback and guides students to make rapid improvement. However, on occasion marking is not up to date or is too cursory to be helpful.

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

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. It offers very good breadth and balance, with extensive opportunities for students to choose accredited courses according to their aspirations and interests. Some of these are the result of excellent partnerships with a local college and special schools. These developments have contributed well to equality of opportunity and good progression for all groups, including those at risk of disaffection from school. The curriculum is strongly enriched and extended by an outstanding and well supported range of extra opportunities, including visits and residential experiences. The impact of these opportunities is clearly evident in the behaviour and attitudes of students, their improving learning and progress, and the very low proportion not involved in education, employment or training.

The care, support and guidance provided for students are outstanding, because they enable all groups of students to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school. Parents, carers and students in unusual numbers testified to the positive effects of carefully-supported transition and meticulously-organised support from a range of school staff and other agencies. Robust monitoring helps the school adapt support to emerging needs and shows increasingly positive impact on the attendance, participation and progress of target groups.

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	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The school is led and managed well. The use of monitoring and evaluation has significantly improved since the previous inspection, and this has given an effective drive to school improvement. A regular cycle of standardised assessment is now established and the school makes good use of information on students' progress to target and evaluate interventions. This has helped to narrow gaps and raise achievement, improving equality of opportunity to a good level. However, parents and carers are not as clear as they might be about how to use the information that is shared with them. In most respects, however, partnership-working is excellent. The school's partnerships extend learning opportunities in cost-effective ways and make an outstanding contribution to students' improving achievement and well-being.

Better information about students' progress has helped middle leaders become more accountable for their areas, and this has boosted performance in several subjects. Good practice in teaching has been identified and professional collaboration is spreading it between subjects, as many staff spoken to recognise. The school's specialist strengths and its resources as a training school make a valuable contribution to the imaginative professional development programme. Leaders and managers have accurately pinpointed the areas in which teaching needs to improve, and these aspects lead their clear plans. Good professional development strategies

are in use. Staff value the opportunities to share the best practice within the school and middle leaders are increasingly effective in leading improvement in their teams.

Monitoring is regular and wide-ranging, although it lacks that sharp focus on clear expectations which supports strong consistency. Systematic review of a wide range of evidence and viewpoints informs the school's self-evaluation, although it does not make full and unflinching use of national comparators. Plans are succinct and clear about milestones. The governing body shows determination in challenging and supporting the school. It is notably well informed about the progress the school is making against the agreed key performance indicators. It has an accurate picture of the school's good impact on improving community cohesion and equality of opportunity because it monitors the impact of changes on, for example, the participation of different groups. It has ensured that procedures for child protection are exemplary. Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, although there is scope to improve quality assurance.

These are the grades for the 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	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

The sixth form is good. Students' capability on entry to the sixth form is broadly average and reflects its inclusive nature. The curriculum provides a broad range of academic and vocational courses to meet their varied needs and interests. Students have positive relationships with their teachers which contribute strongly to their enjoyment of the sixth form. The quality of care, guidance and support they receive maintains the high standard seen in the main school and has a strong effect on their personal development and well-being. Students provide positive role models for younger members of the school, being extensively involved in charitable works, mentoring, supporting the breadth of extra-curricular activities and assisting in the day-to-day operation of the school as prefects. Retention rates have varied in the last three years but are in line with the national average. The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and students make good progress, especially in applied subjects. However, some variability in the performance of subjects persists. Regular assessment enables both teachers and students to monitor progress well. Students are well aware of their target grades and what they need to do to achieve them. The sixth form is led well but not all the information available, including national

comparisons, has been used rigorously enough to give an accurate picture of strengths and areas for development.

These are the grades for the sixth form

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

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire overwhelmingly agreed with all the statements. A relatively high proportion added comments underlining their satisfaction with extra-curricular opportunities and the way the school helps with particular needs. A few respondents expressed concerns about teaching. Inspectors' findings on this are reflected in the report. There were also some criticisms of the way the school informs parents and carers about their children's progress and helps them support learning. Inspectors examined students' progress reports, the planners in which targets are explained, and a sample of marked work. Clearly progress is regularly assessed and reported on, but some features of communication could be more helpful and these were discussed with senior staff.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at King James's 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 470 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,696 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	231	49	206	44	26	6	3	1
The school keeps my child safe	251	53	209	44	3	1	2	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	263	56	171	36	28	6	5	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	226	48	210	45	28	6	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	206	44	228	49	27	6	2	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	167	36	243	52	48	10	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	148	31	269	57	40	9	2	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)	195	41	229	49	18	4	2	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	201	43	235	50	21	4	3	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	189	40	222	47	34	7	2	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	142	30	257	55	33	7	7	1
The school is led and managed effectively	250	53	192	41	17	4	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	269	57	166	35	25	5	5	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 is 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.



5 December 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of King James's School, Knaresborough HG5 8EB

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to the inspectors who recently visited your school and the contribution you made to the inspection. It was a pleasure to meet so many of you, and I am grateful to the parents and carers who shared their views.

The inspection found that King James's is a good school. We were impressed by the qualities you showed, including your excellent behaviour and the very positive contribution you make to your learning and to the wider community. You made clear to us that you value the rich opportunities and personal support the school provides.

Outcomes for students are outstanding. Excellent care, support and guidance and a good broad curriculum, with plenty of choice leading you to qualifications, make a strong contribution to this. Achievement is good, because the progress students make by the end of Year 11 has improved fairly recently. This improvement needs to be embedded through more consistently good teaching and sharper monitoring and evaluation by the school's leaders and managers.

I am sure you will all want to play your part in sustaining the school's improvement. I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector

