

Kenton School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108528
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	395301
Inspection dates	18–19 April 2012
Lead inspector	Ann Ashdown

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	2,057
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	390
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie McHanwell
Headteacher	David Pearmain
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
Additional Inspector
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This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 55 teachers teaching 54 lessons of which five were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors listened to students read and observed the behaviour of students at breaks and lunchtime. Meetings and discussions were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, parents and carers and school staff. The inspection team observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, progress data, safeguarding information, and other documentation. Inspectors analysed 59 questionnaires from parents and carers and also those from students and staff.

Information about the school

Kenton School is much larger than the average-sized secondary school. It has specialist status for the arts and technology and is due to become an academy on 1 May 2012. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. A below average proportion of students are from minority ethnic groups while an average proportion speak English as an additional language. The school has an additionally resourced centre with 18 places for students on the autistic spectrum and eight places for those with speech and language difficulties. The proportion of students supported at school action plus is above average and a well above average proportion has a statement of special educational needs. The school meets the current floor standard which sets out the minimum expectations for attainment and progress. It holds Investor in People Gold and Healthy School status and has gained Artsmark Gold and Sportsmark awards.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is both reflective and self-critical and is characterised by a relentless focus on raising achievement by improving teaching and learning. Action to address a slowing of progress in recent years in English and mathematics has been swift and robust and consequently attainment in these subjects, particularly English, is now rising. Consequently students' progress is accelerating but in mathematics particularly still lags behind other areas of learning. This, together with teaching that is good rather than outstanding, explains why the school is not yet outstanding.
- From below average starting points students make good progress as they move through the school so their attainment is broadly average when they leave Year 11. The sixth form is good. Current students were seen making good progress in lessons due to the good teaching they receive throughout the school.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teaching is very rarely less than satisfactory and in some lessons it is outstanding. In the best lessons knowledgeable teaching, challenging questioning and interesting resources engage students' interest and ensure they make good progress. In satisfactory lessons, students make slower progress because questioning is less challenging and students have fewer opportunities to edit and improve their work.
- Behaviour is typically good. Students are considerate towards each other, staff and visitors. Attendance is improving and, although it remains an area for further improvement, the school's recent concerted action to reduce absenteeism is having a marked impact.
- The headteacher's experienced, perceptive and forward thinking leadership, supported by that of a very talented senior team, ensures that the school continues to improve. The management of performance and the leadership of teaching are good. The sharing of good practice and the provision of high quality professional development for staff are strengths of the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment and further accelerate students' progress, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - adopting similar strategies to those that have accelerated progress in English
 - building on strengths in teaching and ensuring all lessons are good or better
 - asking more complex and open questions to challenge all students
 - ensuring advice from teachers' marking is followed up quickly and students edit and improve their work.
- Further improve attendance and reduce the number of students who are persistent absentees by:
 - monitoring and evaluating the impact of initiatives to improve attendance and refining these to ensure they have maximum effect.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

In lessons most students have mature attitudes to learning, are keen to succeed and concentrate on the task in hand. They respond well to the good teaching they receive and make good progress. Of the small number of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire, most are happy with the progress their children are making and with the way in which the school is helping students to develop reading and writing skills. This view was confirmed by inspectors when they heard students read, observed lessons and scrutinised students' work. Younger students made excellent progress in their learning in a geography lesson as they discussed the social, economic and environmental factors associated with the opening of a new coal mine. In a sixth form English lesson, students enjoyed learning and confidently identified idiomatic, archaic and colloquial language in reports of football matches in both historical and contemporary texts. Work in students' books and displayed on walls along with the school's own detailed tracking system all confirmed that students are achieving well so that their attainment is broadly average by the end of Year 11. Students who speak English as an additional language, disabled students and those with special educational needs make equally good progress as their peers because they receive timely and sharply focused extra help when this is needed. Staff in the additionally resourced centres for students with speech and language difficulties and for those on the autistic spectrum ensure that these students' needs are met well. Students receive good specialist teaching and support to enable them to make good progress in their learning. This includes students known to be eligible for free school meals who are closing the gap with their peers.

Students enter Year 7 with attainment which is significantly below that found nationally, particularly in literacy. They make good progress in both key stages and in the sixth form. In 2011, at the end of Year 11 over 90% of students gained five or more A*-C grades in national examinations. Students' success in a range of vocational courses, equivalent to GCSEs, contributes significantly to their overall attainment. Their success in arts and technology subjects reflects the beneficial impact of the school's dual specialist status in these areas. Following a dip in students' achievement in English and mathematics after the

previous inspection the school has taken robust action to address this weakness. As a result of improvements in teaching, particularly in English, and a relentless focus on promoting literacy across the curriculum, the school's detailed students' progress data now shows that current students in Years 10 and 11 are on track to attain standards in line with national averages in English and close to national averages in mathematics. In the sixth form, students make good progress from often well below average starting points and reach standards which are much closer to average in both academic and vocational examinations when they leave Year 13.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is good. Most parents and carers rightly feel that their children are taught well at Kenton School. The impact of good professional development is evident in the quality of lessons, which are mainly good with examples of outstanding teaching. In the best lessons, teachers make maximum use of interesting resources to provide students with challenging and relevant tasks which ensure they become engrossed in their learning. Work is well matched to the needs of students because effective use is made of assessment data to plan learning. In these good and better lessons, teachers ask complex and open-ended questions which extend students' knowledge and understanding and accelerate their progress. In satisfactory lessons tasks are not as demanding, the pace is slower and questioning is not as perceptive and challenging. In lessons teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson well-targeted questions skilfully gave all students the opportunity to express their opinions and any concerns about different types of bullying. They gained a good understanding of, for example, the dangers of cyber-bullying and were successfully encouraged to consider contrasting viewpoints, share ideas and information and cooperate in pairs and groups.

Students' work is marked regularly and examples of good practice were seen across the school. However, students are not always given time to read and respond to the detailed marking that teachers provide. Hence opportunities to edit and improve their work further are missed. Disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those in the additionally resourced centres, are well taught. They make good progress as a result of a combination of effective in-class support, small group and one-to-one specialist teaching.

The extensive planned curriculum is well matched to the needs and aspirations of Kenton students in both the main school and the sixth form. Its success is evident in the increasing numbers of students who chose to join the sixth form and the reduction in numbers of students who do not enter further education or training.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Although a few parents and carers have concerns about behaviour in lessons, when inspectors investigated these concerns they found behaviour to be typically good. Scrutiny of behavioural records and discussions with students show this is the case over time too. Most students have good attitudes to learning and the vast majority of lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of trust and respect. In corridors and public spaces students were seen behaving well. They are friendly and welcoming to visitors and show kindness and respect towards each other and to school staff. Sixth formers were seen to show particularly mature attitudes and the sixth form area of the school provided a well-resourced, calm and supportive environment which facilitated learning very well. The vast

majority of parents and carers feel that the school keeps students safe. Students endorse this view and say they feel safe in school. They clearly understand that there are different types of bullying and most are confident that any incidents of bullying that do occur are dealt with promptly.

All students, including, those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, are well supported by specialist welfare staff. Attendance has been low in the past but is now improving significantly and is on target to be close to national averages this year. The number of students who are persistent absentees is declining. These improvements are due to the appointment of dedicated staff to promote good attendance and a more robust approach to following up absence. However, the school recognises that this remains a priority for improvement and recent initiatives have yet to be fully developed, their impact monitored and practice refined to ensure they have maximum effect.

Leadership and management

Kenton School is characterised by its continual drive for improvement and high quality professional development and performance management which enables staff to reflect upon, share and develop their good practice. Any relative weaknesses, such as those previously evident in English, are swiftly identified and successfully addressed so that gaps in performance with students nationally are narrowing. Under the very experienced leadership of the headteacher, members of the senior team have been conspicuously successful in promoting improved attainment and progress in English. With similar intensive support, students' progress in mathematics is now beginning to accelerate. Members of the governing body have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, share the headteacher's clear vision for improvement and are fully involved in monitoring its work. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Given its track record of improvement the school has good capacity to improve further.

All students are given good equal opportunities to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. The school's motto, 'all different all equal' is clearly borne out in the school's practice and is particularly reflected in a curriculum which is very broad and balanced and caters for the needs of all students. Vocational courses, such as those seen taking place in the school's well-equipped hairdressing salon, academic 'A' and 'AS' levels and a very wide range of GCSE and equivalent courses allow students a wide choice of pathways to suit their abilities and aptitudes. A recent focus on developing literacy across the curriculum has made a good contribution to raising attainment and a further focus on promoting numeracy is beginning to have an impact. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well both through the taught curriculum and through their participation in activities beyond the school day. An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits enriches the curriculum. For example, during the inspection enthusiastic reports were received from a group of students who are currently visiting China. Evidence of students' expertise and participation in drama, sport and the arts is proudly displayed in the school's public spaces. Safeguarding procedures fully meet requirements. Staff are well trained and highly aware of child-protection, risk assessment and safer recruitment policies and procedures

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



20 April 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Kenton School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE3 3RU

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we inspected your school this week. A particular thank you to those of you who shared your views by filling in our questionnaires and discussed with us in such a balanced way the qualities of your school. Please thank your parents and carers who also filled in our questionnaires.

This is what we have said about your school in our report.

- Yours is a good school which continues to improve.
- Your achievement is good because you make good progress and your attainment is average.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress.
- You respond well to the good teaching you receive.
- The way your school is led and managed and the curriculum you follow are good.
- Your behaviour is typically good.
- Your school ensures you feel safe.

This is what we have asked your school to do to improve further.

- Raise attainment and further accelerate your progress, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - adopting similar strategies to those that have accelerated your progress in English
 - building on strengths in teaching and ensuring all your lessons are good or better
 - asking you more complex and open questions to challenge your thinking
 - ensuring advice from teachers' marking is followed up quickly and you edit and improve your work.
- Further improve your attendance and reduce the number of students who are persistent absentees by:
 - checking that strategies to improve your attendance are working as well as they possibly can.

All of you can help your school improve further by attending regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Ann Ashdown
Lead Inspector

