

Kingsdown Secondary School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

Kingsdown Secondary School is an independent special school which provides education for students aged between 11 and 16 years who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. It is registered for up to 40 boys and girls. Currently 17 students attend, all of whom are boys, and all have a statement of special educational needs. Students have usually failed to thrive in their previous educational settings and almost all have levels of numeracy and literacy below that expected for their age. They have their places funded by their local authorities and generally attend from South London boroughs. The school is located in a residential area on the outskirts of Croydon in Surrey. It opened in 2001 and is in the ownership of a limited company, McRae Residential Care Services.

The school aims to 'nurture young people's confidence in order that they may embark upon a new journey through learning'. It was last inspected by Ofsted in June 2009.

Evaluation of the school

Kingsdown Secondary School provides a good quality of education and is successful in helping students re-engage with learning. Students make good progress, which is reflected in their success in public examinations. Their positive response to the introduction of more challenging courses has improved their progress since the time of the last inspection and raised their self-esteem. Teaching and assessment are satisfactory, but the pastoral support given by teachers is good and contributes significantly to students' good progress. Consequently, provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as are the arrangements for students' welfare, health and safety and safeguarding. The school meets all except one of the regulatory requirements.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum is good. The curriculum is supported by a clear policy which emphasises the development of students' basic numeracy and literacy skills and their success in gaining suitable qualifications. It covers all the required areas of

¹ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/contents.

² www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2005/18/contents.

learning and takes close account of the National Curriculum. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow GCSE courses in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT). They also choose from a range of additional vocational courses. The school has established links with a local school, which provides music technology, and vocational courses in land based studies, construction and motor vehicle maintenance. Courses in food technology and hospitality and catering are provided on the school site. Students receive a suitable amount of physical exercise by visiting a local sports field.

The school meets the needs of students as set out in their statements of special educational needs. Students are taught in small groups with extra individual sessions for those who struggle with reading and writing. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme contains appropriate topics, for example developing positive relationships, drugs misuse, the difference between assertive and aggressive behaviour and financial management. It is supported extremely well by weekly group sessions run by a visiting youth worker. The timetable is organised effectively to help keep students focused on learning, many of whom find it difficult to concentrate for long periods of time. Lessons are 40 minutes in length and the lunch break is shortened to 25 minutes.

There are occasional trips out and visits to enrich the curriculum, for example to London Zoo or a local farm. The amount of time given to teaching is considerably more than the minimum required and many students arrive at school early for breakfast.

The quality of teaching and assessment is satisfactory. It is not yet good because there is too much variation in quality between lessons. The headteacher has an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in teaching across the school. She has involved senior leaders from a local school to help monitor teaching and learning which has led to several recent improvements.

Teachers have high expectations and manage students' behaviour skilfully. They establish good relations with students and often use humour to diffuse potentially difficult situations. They have secure subject knowledge which equips them to teach GCSE courses effectively. In the best lessons, learning moves at a brisk pace because activities give students the right level of challenge. Teachers explain clearly what students are expected to learn and use questioning well to check that they understand what they need to do. Lessons are broken into short steps which help students to concentrate.

In less successful lessons, particularly in English, learning is slower because texts and resources are not always chosen which capture the interest of adolescent boys, particularly those who struggle with reading. Learning support assistants form positive relationships with students, giving praise and encouragement which help students to persevere with their work. Sometimes they give too much help, rather than planning their interventions carefully so that students learn how to work on their own. Teaching sometimes does not allow sufficient opportunity for students to

develop their speaking and listening skills. This is because lessons typically involve students giving brief answers to the teacher's questions rather than discussing their ideas with each other.

Homework is set and marked regularly, with some students given extra help to complete it at breakfast time before school.

Students' attainment is assessed on entry to the school and at the end of each term. Challenging targets are set using National Curriculum levels of attainment. Students make good progress in relation to their starting points. The main reasons for this are the rigour of the curriculum and the standards it sets, students' positive response to it, and effective pastoral support. At the end of the last academic year, all students gained five GCSE or equivalent examination passes including mathematics and English, and most gained five passes at a high level. All students who left at the end of the last academic year progressed to suitable destinations in education or further training. Some students would like to study a wider range of subjects, but as one commented, 'We learn a lot.'

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall even though some aspects are satisfactory rather than good. The school's culture of high expectations, effectively expressed by the teaching staff, is particularly successful in boosting students' belief in their ability to achieve. As a result, students develop positive attitudes to learning and work hard. They gain a range of qualifications which they know are valued in wider society and will enhance their future employment prospects. Achievement and effort are recognised, for example in weekly assemblies and through the awarding of certificates for 'student of the term' or 'achiever of the year'.

Moral themes are considered effectively through, for example, literature in English and in PSHE sessions. Staff discuss students' behaviour and help students to develop a greater understanding of the consequences of their actions and the impact on others.

Students' behaviour is satisfactory. Almost all students enter the school with negative experiences of learning and most have had difficulties controlling their anger. Incidents of challenging behaviour do occur, but the school's consistent approach to the management of behaviour, with clear rewards and sanctions, helps students to improve their behaviour. Lessons are generally calm and purposeful and behaviour around the school is relaxed and orderly. However, aspects of behaviour and social skills which involve students working together with others are underdeveloped. Very good opportunities are provided in the PSHE sessions, but not included routinely in other lessons. Attendance is satisfactory. Several students have improved their attendance since joining the school. The attendance of some students is affected by events beyond the school's control, for example when a student might leave the area.

Students contribute to the school and wider community, for example when they cook products and sell them in aid of the Jeans for Genes charity, or host the end of term open evening for parents and carers. They benefit from an appropriate citizenship programme which successfully promotes knowledge of public institutions and services. This includes topics on democracy, the work of Parliament and international organisations such as the European Union.

Good support is given to students to develop an understanding of, and a respect for, different religious and cultural traditions. Students mix freely around the school and, in questionnaires, they overwhelmingly express the view that students show respect for each other's backgrounds. An understanding of different cultures is covered, for example, in work on images and culture in the media, and in the stories of different faith traditions and cultures from around the world. This is strengthened through links with the local church and by visitors to the school, for example to promote Black History Week.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The provision for students' welfare, health and safety is good. Procedures to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying are reviewed regularly and followed by staff. Staff have had suitable training in behaviour management and deal with challenging incidents in a calm manner. Although the majority of students report that they think behaviour is not good in the school, they do feel safe and think that staff manage misbehaviour effectively. The success of the school's approach is demonstrated by the year-on-year fall in the number of exclusions.

Robust arrangements are in place to safeguard students, and staff have received recent training, at the appropriate level, in child protection. Thorough risk assessments for activities and off-site visits, combined with appropriate staffing, ensure a good level of safety for students. Detailed health and safety policies and procedures cover all aspect of the school's work. Fire drills are held regularly and fire-fighting equipment is checked as required by a specialist company. There is a suitable policy for the administration of first aid and several staff have completed training in first aid. While meeting the regulations, the school is rightly reviewing arrangements in this area to make procedures clearer.

Students are supported to lead a healthy lifestyle through topics covered in the PSHE and physical education curricula. They learn about healthy eating in food technology and safe use of the internet in ICT.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school has thorough procedures for the safe recruitment of staff. All of the required checks are on the suitability of the proprietor and of staff have been completed effectively. All checks are recorded appropriately in a single central register.

Premises and accommodation at the school

The accommodation is maintained to a high standard and attractive displays of students' work reinforce the climate for learning. Classrooms are small but of adequate size for the number of students using them. Specialist rooms are provided for teaching information and communication technology, science and food technology. Satisfactory space for outside recreation is provided by a grassed area and a patio with picnic tables.

Provision of information

Almost all the required information is provided, or made available through the school's website, to parents, carers and others. Parents and carers are provided with termly reports which contain appropriate information on students' attainment and progress. The school keeps detailed information on the expenditure incurred for students generally, but does not give a breakdown on costs incurred for individual students to the local authorities which fund their place.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The recently updated complaints policy meets all of the regulatory requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of the one listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the provision of information (standards in part 6) and must:

- Where a pupil who is registered at the school is wholly or partly funded by the local authority, submit an annual account of income received and expenditure incurred by the school in respect of that pupil to the local authority and on request to the Secretary of State (paragraph 6(7)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development.

- Target adult support more effectively so it helps students develop the skills to work on their own.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/1997/contents/made.

- Provide better resources that meet the interests of secondary age boys, especially for those students who have difficulties with reading.
- Develop students' speaking and listening skills by increasing opportunities in lessons for students to discuss their ideas with each other.

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs			✓	
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		✓		
The behaviour of pupils			✓	

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Special		
Date school opened	September 2001		
Age range of pupils	11–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 17	Girls: 0	Total: 17
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 17	Girls: 0	Total: 17
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 5	Girls: 0	Total: 5
Annual fees (day pupils)	£35,000 to £45,000		
Address of school	112 Orchard Road Sanderstead Surrey CR2 9LQ		
Telephone number	020 8657 1200		
Email address	admin@kingsdownsse.com		
Headteacher	Ms Debra Henderson		
Proprietor	Mr Kevin Henry		

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.

29 November 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Kingsdown Secondary School, Sanderstead, CR2 9LQ

As you know, I visited your school recently to check how well it is doing. I enjoyed my visit. Thanks to those of you who took time to talk to me about your work and life at school. I also talked to staff and to some other adults connected with the school, visited lessons and looked at your work.

Here are the main points.

- Your school gives you a good education.
- You generally work hard in lessons and make good progress.
- Your school helps you to feel more confident about what you can achieve.
- Your school is particularly successful at helping you to get good results in your examinations.
- The range of courses is not as wide as in some other schools, but most of you enjoy school and feel working in small groups helps you learn better.
- Your school cares for you well and you have a good relationship with adults.

I have asked the school to improve the following things.

- Encourage some of you to work with less help from adults.
- Get you to discuss your ideas with each other more often in lessons.
- Give you more interesting resources to help you learn, especially in English.

You can help by trying to work answers out on your own before asking for help, and by listening to each other carefully when you discuss topics. Thank you once again for your help with the inspection.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath
Her Majesty's Inspector