

Keswick School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112441
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	357104
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Stephen Wall

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Non-maintained
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	1057
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Peck
Headteacher	Mr Michael Chapman
Date of previous school inspection	6 December 2007
School address	Vicarage Hill Keswick Cumbria CA12 5QB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They observed teaching and learning in 25 lessons in the main school, and 11 in the sixth form taught by 11 teachers respectively. Inspectors held meetings with staff, students and the Chair of the Governing Body. They observed the school's work and looked at the monitoring of students' progress, the school's monitoring, self-evaluation and planning for improvement, and the school's documentation relating to safeguarding. The inspectors also analysed 248 questionnaires returned by parents and carers and took account of questionnaires completed by staff and students.

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

- How well all groups of students in the main school achieve, especially boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- How well students in the sixth form make progress and achieve from their starting points.
- How effectively the curriculum matches the needs and abilities of all groups of students, especially lower ability students.

Information about the school

This is a slightly larger than average secondary school in which the proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. Most students are White British. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well-below average. The school takes students from a wide catchment area. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2010. Having finished their examinations, Year 11 and Year 13 students were not in school during the inspection.

The school is a specialist school for science and mathematics and has been a designated Training School for two years. The school is also a consultant school for the Specialist Schools Trust and a Gifted and Talented National School. It is a Pioneer School and has gained an Arkwright Scholarship. It has Healthy School, Eco School and Fairtrade School status. The school was granted Academy status in July 2011.

The school provides boarding provision for 50 students. This provision was inspected and reported on separately in February 2011.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding school. All aspects of outcomes, provision, and leadership and management in both the main school and the sixth form are outstanding. Aspects of the school's work judged good at the time of the previous inspection have improved significantly; they are now outstanding. Self-evaluation is exemplary. This demonstrates the school's outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

The school is hugely successful in providing for students' personal development and academic success in equal measure. The two elements combine and, as a result, students are exceptionally proud of their school and eager to take full advantage of all it offers. Students are polite, mature, well-balanced and inquisitive. Their behaviour is excellent; this makes a profound contribution to their outstanding learning, progress and achievement. Students thrive in the relaxed yet highly ordered and aspirational tone set by senior leaders and staff. Students' high levels of attainment together with their outstanding personal qualities mean that they are exceptionally well prepared for future success and economic well-being.

Attainment is high. School data show, and inspection evidence confirms, that previous gaps in achievement between, for example, girls and boys and the small number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other students have been tackled effectively; all groups of students now make outstanding progress. At the root of students' outstanding progress and achievement is the high-quality teaching. It is consistently purposeful, lively and challenging and ranges from good to outstanding. Some teaching is of truly remarkable quality. The outstanding curriculum is sharply focused on academic success. Increasingly, it is offering a wider range of alternatives for students in vocational courses and for the relatively small number of students who are less academically inclined. The programme of extra-curricular activities is exceptional. It makes an outstanding contribution to students' personal development and their very high levels of enjoyment.

Leaders and managers provide the school with a rock-solid rationale and vision for success. They lead by example. Expectations are high and only the best will do. Teamwork across the school is exceptionally strong in pursuit of excellence. The governing body provides outstanding levels of support and challenge. The school uses its specialist status and its status as a Training School astutely to forge outstanding partnerships, improve the quality of teaching and support students' outstanding achievement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment even further by:
 - increasing further the amount of outstanding teaching

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- making sure that teaching is consistent in providing students in the main school with opportunities to develop their skills as independent learners.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

In lessons students are extremely diligent. They are always keen to do their very best. They show high levels of engagement and enjoyment. They enjoy working in small groups and pairs where they are keen to express their ideas and listen respectfully to others' contributions. They are very adept at assessing their own progress and identifying what they need to do to improve. Students really enjoy working things out for themselves. They rise to challenges eagerly. However, on a few occasions, teachers provide answers and explanations too readily when students are capable of working things out for themselves. From starting points that are generally above average, students make outstanding progress to attain very high levels by the end of Key Stage 4. In 2010, for example, over 75% of students gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics against a national average of 54%. School data indicate that this will rise even higher this year. The proportion of students gaining A* and A grades across a range of subjects is also well above average. The few students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and lower ability students also make outstanding progress.

Students' enjoyment of school is seen not only in their relaxed and happy demeanour but in their high levels of attendance. 'I don't really look forward to the summer holidays because I'd rather be in school', is a typical comment. Students say they feel exceptionally safe in school. They have excellent knowledge of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Participation rates in the extensive range of sporting activities, including walking activities in the countryside surrounding the school, are very high.

The school council and eco council are greatly valued by students. Representatives of the school council, for example, take part in the appointment of new staff. Year 8 students act as mentors to Year 7 and sixth form students are highly active throughout the school in mentoring other students. Students' outstanding social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is seen in the excellence of their behaviour, their high levels of respect and their wholehearted work to support others less fortunate than themselves through, for example, extensive fair-trade activities.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	1
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:	1
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good and much is outstanding. It provides students with high levels of challenge and stimulating activities. It is always purposeful, lively and extremely well planned. The very best teaching takes students to levels that are well beyond age-related expectations. For example, a Year 7 class showed fantastic levels of creativity and sensibility in discussing and analysing characters from 'A Midsummer's Night Dream' and a Year 8 class made very good progress in using the past tense in German because expert teaching presented students with a huge variety of expertly planned activities conducted exclusively in the foreign language. Accurate assessment data is used astutely to set very demanding targets. High quality marking ensures that students understand what they need to do to improve their work and reach their targets.

The largely academic curriculum provides a wide range of subject options. It meets students' needs and abilities. Together with outstanding teaching it leads to outstanding outcomes in students' achievement and underpins the very high 'can do' expectations of the school. The curricular provision for lower ability students in aspects such as vocational education is growing rapidly and securely. The range of extra-curricular activities is the jewel in the school's crown. Regular activity weeks, sports, cultural events and a host of educational trips out both locally and abroad, broaden students' horizons and play a pivotal role in developing their outstanding levels of personal development and well-being.

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Care, guidance and support are of the very highest order. Students are well known as individuals. Students have implicit trust in staff to help them with any problems or questions. They value the presence of a full-time school nurse on site. Students and staff care deeply for each other's welfare. This was especially evident during a tragic and traumatic incident that the school underwent just over a year ago. Transition arrangements for students joining the school in Year 7 are highly effective in helping them settle seamlessly into school life. Older students speak very highly of the exemplary support and guidance that they receive in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form to help them formulate their future plans.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body, are confident, decisive and highly effective. They evaluate the effectiveness of the school accurately. There is a constant and successful drive for further improvement. Teamwork across the school is exceptionally strong. Outstanding relationships with parents and carers have been forged. The leadership and management of teaching and learning benefit strongly from the school's status as a Training School. The effectiveness of the in-house programme for professional development for staff is seen in the improving quality of teaching and the significant and rapid rise in students' achievement. The school has comprehensive plans in place to raise further the proportion of outstanding teaching.

Outstanding attention to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination promotes an exceptionally harmonious and happy school community. The previous gap between girls' and boys' achievement and between the small number of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and other students has been tackled decisively so that gaps have narrowed rapidly and securely.

Safeguarding is excellent. As result, students are highly risk aware without being risk averse. The quality of risk assessments for the huge number of trips out is exemplary. The governing body is highly proactive in pursuing its safeguarding responsibilities. Training for all staff is regular and of the highest quality. Meticulous checks on the suitability of all adults working with students are carried out.

The school follows a comprehensive action plan to promote and develop community cohesion. Students are very active in the local community where the school is highly regarded. A wide range of activities and educational trips broaden students' appreciation of other cultures and religions. Discussions with students show their deep understanding of cultural and religious diversity at home and abroad.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students are very proud of the outstanding sixth form. Sixth form students are confident, aspirational and extremely mature young people. They enjoy taking on responsibilities across the school, especially by becoming mentors to younger students. The sixth form is an excellent role model of hard work and high standards for the rest of the school. Students join the sixth form with above average levels of attainment. They build on this outstandingly well and achieve very high levels of attainment by the time they leave. The proportion of students going on to university degree courses, frequently at highly-regarded establishments, is very high.

Students achieve so well in the sixth form because teaching is consistently of the highest quality. It is challenging, lively and purposeful at all times. It is consistent in promoting students' thinking skills and their skills as independent learners. As in the main school, some teaching is of quite remarkable quality. In a Year 12 chemistry class, for example, the look of pure delight on students' faces when they grasped the purpose of the activity they were asked to do was memorable; it was as though a light bulb had been switched on in a dark room. Care, guidance and support in the sixth form are outstanding. Students flourish in an environment that encourages them to aim high. Students are full of praise for the support and guidance they receive to help them formulate their plans for the future.

Sixth form leaders and managers are outstandingly effective. They set high expectations at all times. Students' progress towards demanding targets is tracked regularly and accurately. Exceptionally strong relations with parents and carers have been forged. As in the main school, sixth form leaders and managers are highly effective in combining

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academic success with outstanding levels of personal development and well-being: as a result, students are exceptionally well prepared for future success.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Taking into account:	
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

Nearly a quarter of parents and carers returned questionnaires. This is a slightly higher than average level of response. Most questionnaires indicated that parents and carers are extremely happy with the education provided by the school. A few parents and carers felt that the school does not help them support their children's learning. This was looked into by inspectors who found that the school involves parents and carers in supporting students' learning by, for example, putting on successful curriculum evenings for parents in mathematics and English.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Keswick 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 248 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1057 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	107	43	126	51	13	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	127	51	111	45	6	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	94	38	136	55	14	6	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	106	43	121	49	18	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	102	41	132	53	12	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	72	29	128	52	38	15	1	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	73	29	151	61	18	7	2	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)	93	38	126	51	14	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	99	40	130	52	14	6	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	139	56	90	36	14	6	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	77	31	125	50	18	7	7	3
The school is led and managed effectively	126	51	100	40	18	7	4	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	133	54	102	41	9	4	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 2010 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.



8 July 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Keswick School, Keswick, CA12 5QB

Thank you for the warmth of the welcome you gave to me and my fellow inspectors during the recent inspection of your school.

You will be pleased to learn that you go to a truly outstanding school in every respect, including the sixth form. We saw how proud you are of your school and no wonder when it offers you so much. It sets very high expectations for each of you. You obviously enjoy rising to these challenges. The progress you make in your learning is outstanding. It is the product of your hard work and the very high quality teaching you receive. Some of the teaching that inspectors observed during the inspection was truly remarkable. It was pleasing to see how eagerly you take up the enrichment activities provided by the school. These are important in broadening your horizons and helping you to develop into the confident and mature young people that you are.

We are asking your school to do a couple of things to make your school even more outstanding.

Raise attainment even further by:

- increasing further the amount of outstanding teaching
- making sure that teaching is consistent in providing you with opportunities to develop your skills as independent learners in the main school.

It was a pleasure to spend two days in your school. I am confident that you will continue to work and play hard to make sure your school reaches even greater heights in the coming years.

I wish you the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Wall

Lead inspector

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