

The King John School

Shipwrights Drive, Thundersley, Benfleet, SS7 1RQ

Inspection dates

19–20 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Students' attainment over time at GCSE is consistently well above the national average in almost all subjects, including in English and mathematics. The proportion of students achieving the top grades at GCSE is rising.
- The sixth form is good and improving. Increasing numbers of students are gaining top grades in examinations.
- All groups of students, including those who have special educational needs, make excellent progress. A high proportion of students make better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Teachers have high expectations and plan innovative and engaging lessons that are well matched to students' abilities. Consistently good, often outstanding teaching, enables students to learn well and make exceptional progress.
- Students' behaviour is exemplary. Students are polite and friendly and relationships between staff and students are very good. The school is a happy and harmonious community; students support each other and enjoy learning together. They are proud of their school.
- Leaders, managers and the governing body know their school well. Self-evaluation processes are accurate and informed by rigorous monitoring.
- The head teacher and her senior leadership team have focused on developing high quality teaching and learning within a collaborative, supportive environment. They have created a learning ethos that permeates the school, for staff and students alike.
- The head teacher has established collaborative partnerships with other schools in order to give support and share good practice. Teachers have benefitted from the opportunity to work in other schools and enhance their professional development.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities, clubs, trips and visits make a very strong contribution to students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 53 lessons, of which 13 were observed jointly with members of the school leadership team. In addition, the inspection team observed two assemblies and made a number of short visits to lessons and observations around the school.
- Meetings were held with governors, four different groups of students and a representative from the local authority. In addition, several meetings were held with school staff, including middle and senior leaders.
- Inspectors took account of information published on the school website, staff, parent and student surveys, 49 responses to the online Parent View survey and 2 letters from parents.
- They looked closely at a range of documentation, including information on students' performance, the schools' own analysis of strengths and weaknesses, improvement plans, safeguarding and behaviour policies, and records and documents relating to the targets set for teachers to improve their work. Inspectors also reviewed examples of students' past and present work.

Inspection team

Jackie Easter, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Josephine Lewis	Additional Inspector
Hermione Horn	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector
Jennifer Carpenter	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The King John School is a much larger than average secondary academy specialising in mathematics and computing.
- The school converted to an academy in April 2011. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good with outstanding features.
- Most students are from White British heritage with a well below average percentage of students from minority ethnic groups. Few students speak English as a second language.
- The proportion of students supported by a statement of special educational needs or by school action is well below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well below average. This is additional funding for students known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- A small number of students follow vocational courses on a part time basis at ITEC, Futures Community College and Crown College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school supports other local schools and is a lead partner in a National Challenge Trust school and an academy sponsor. The school achieved National Support School status in 2011.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the impact of teachers' marking by giving clear guidance to students on how to improve their work and making sure that students are given more opportunities to respond to the written advice they are given.
- Promote students' independent learning effectively by providing more opportunities to work on their own and share their ideas with others.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- High expectations and a strong focus on improving teaching and students' learning has had a consistent positive impact over time on the attainment and progress of all students, including those with special needs and those students eligible for pupil premium funding. It was evident from lesson observations and discussions with pupils during the inspection that students are extremely well motivated and keen to achieve their best.
- The proportion of students achieving five or more GCSEs including English and mathematics at grade C or above has been consistently well above the national average. Students join the school with higher than average attainment and make rapid progress so that a high proportion make better than expected progress overall, especially in mathematics.
- All groups of students achieve well. The school has used pupil premium funding to offer a wide range of additional support to students. This has ensured that their achievement is broadly in line with national averages and, although overall scores are slightly below their peers, the gap is narrowing rapidly. A particularly effective recent initiative has been the provision of the 'Chrysalis' groups in order to develop the reading and literacy skills of groups of students in Years 7 and 8. As a result of carefully planned interventions and support, these students have made significant progress.
- The careful tracking of individual student attainment has contributed to the outstanding progress across most subjects. Students whose progress is a concern, for whatever reason, are well supported. Teachers give individuals the time and attention that they need in order to ensure they are progressing well towards their targets and a range of measures are in place to support them. Students know their targets and what they need to do to improve. They told inspectors that they feel their teachers are always willing to help and 'go the extra mile' for them.
- The school carefully monitors overall student attainment and acts quickly to address any issues at a strategic level. For example, the leadership team has addressed concerns about previous low outcomes in science and the percentage of students achieving A*-C grades at GCSE rose by 34% in 2013. They also recognised that the number of students achieving higher grades at GCSE was an area of concern and focused their efforts on improving the progress of the most able students. All teachers have had advice and guidance on teaching the most able, and a variety of strategies, such as master classes, have been implemented. As a result, much higher proportions of students achieved A*/A grades at GCSE in 2013 across a number of subjects. For example, the percentage of A*/A's in science, history and music increased by a further 10% in 2013.
- The wide range of academic and vocational subjects and courses on offer, both at Key Stage 4 and post-16 allows students from different starting points to select appropriate pathways. A small number of students follow vocational courses on a part-time basis at local colleges and this has enabled these students to achieve well. All vocational courses achieved a 100% pass rate in 2013. Outcomes in the sixth form improved dramatically in 2013 as a result of changes to staffing and the curriculum, improved transition into the sixth form, and a much greater emphasis on tracking individual progress and acting on any concerns.
- Students read widely and often. Reading is a regular feature of tutor time and good attention has been given to support teachers in developing approaches to improving students' reading and wider literacy skills. The well-stocked Learning Resource Centre helps to develop students' independent research skills and interest in reading for pleasure. In lessons, inspectors saw

teachers in many subjects focusing on improving vocabulary development, together with spoken and written expression. Students apply and are interviewed for roles as 'Literacy leaders'. This involves mentoring and coaching younger students, as well as helping to make decisions about the texts in the resource centre.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The vast majority of teaching is good and very often outstanding. Teaching engages all groups of students and challenges the most able, using a range of effective strategies. Students respond well to the challenge; they have high expectations of themselves and are eager to learn.
- Recent changes in leadership of the sixth form have led to further improvement in teaching. Closer monitoring of the quality of teaching and the impact on students' learning has resulted in teaching of high quality.
- Teachers check students' learning during lessons and adjust their teaching so that students make good progress. Their timely interventions have a significant impact on the quality of learning. For example, in an outstanding history lesson the teacher used a variety of techniques to check understanding, assess progress and quickly identify those in need of further support. He used probing questions to test students' understanding and this developed high levels of debate and discussion about Hitler's philosophy.
- Teachers know their students well and they use this information to plan lessons and activities that are well matched to their abilities and interests. They routinely help students to know what they are aiming for by giving them examples, sharing the criteria for success and helping them to make improvements. For example, in an outstanding gymnastics lesson students worked well together, assessing each other's performance against a clear set of criteria and encouraging and helping their partners to develop their technique and achieve at a higher level.
- Teachers frequently develop literacy skills in all subjects. The school has a 'word of the week' strategy where students are encouraged to use challenging vocabulary in their discussions and contributions. Students read regularly in lessons and in form time and each subject encourages wider reading linked to the topics and themes they are studying. Inspectors saw many examples of teachers teaching the meaning of key vocabulary. In an outstanding drama lesson the teacher helped students to understand several key subject terms by exploring the 'root' words and this helped to develop students' understanding.
- Marking is frequent and there are excellent examples in some subjects of teachers giving clear advice to students on how to improve their work and evidence that the students have acted on this feedback. This good practice is not developed consistently within and across all subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Students' behaviour is exemplary. They have extremely positive attitudes to learning and are keen to succeed. Students are highly supportive of each other and good relationships between staff and students are a strong feature of the school.
- Students are proud of themselves and their school and they welcome guests confidently. In discussions with inspectors, students were very positive about the care, support and guidance that they receive. They told inspectors that the school is a harmonious community where they feel safe and secure, that bullying rarely occurs and if it did happen it would be dealt with swiftly

and effectively. Students showed a good understanding of bullying in all its forms and were keenly aware of potential risks involving their personal safety.

- Students move quietly and calmly around the school. Despite pockets of congestion and crowding in some corridors, students behave respectfully and courteously to one another at all times.
- The skilled and highly consistent behaviour management by all staff makes a positive climate for learning. Careful monitoring and tracking, and support for students and for teachers has led to a significant reduction over time in instances of poor behaviour and exclusions. The 'Curriculum Plus Centre' offers excellent advice and support for the very few students whose behaviour, on occasions, is unacceptable. A range of strategies, very often focused on academic achievement, are used effectively to support these students.
- The school encourages students to support one another in a variety of ways. For example, sixth form mentors and the 'Peer Listener' scheme involve working with younger students. Students told inspectors they were proud to be involved in the scheme.
- The vast majority of students enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average and improving. The school celebrates good attendance and has robust systems for dealing with the rare instances of poor attendance.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The Head Teacher and her leadership team have high expectations and aspirations for their staff and the students and they communicate this at all levels. They have a genuine passion for what they do, a commitment to the students and a relentless focus on improving standards. Whole school self-evaluation is robust and based on a wide range of evidence which is regularly updated and systematically reviewed.
- The quality of teaching is rigorously monitored by middle and senior leaders through lesson observations and systematic checking of students' work and progress. The expectation is that all lessons, including those in the sixth form, should be good or outstanding and any lessons that fall below this are followed up with teachers so that they receive the appropriate support and guidance to ensure that actions are in place to improve outcomes. There is a genuinely reflective culture of learning and a desire to improve teaching among the staff. This is supported by a wide range of opportunities for staff development such as weekly 'teaching and learning slots' at staff meetings, opportunities to follow 'Outstanding Teacher' and 'Improving Teacher' programmes and access to MEd courses.
- Leadership of the sixth form is effective and is now securing positive outcomes for students.
- The leadership team has ensured that all staff recognise the importance of developing literacy skills. Whole school approaches to improving literacy are applied well and these are having an impact on students' progress and engagement.
- The school offers a very wide range of subjects and courses, both academic and vocational and students are given clear guidance and support in selecting their options. The curriculum is rich and varied, whatever the pathway followed, and contributes well to students' achievement and physical well-being. Students' personal, social, moral and cultural development is promoted through the curriculum and assemblies, as well as an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. The school enjoys particular success in sport, both locally and nationally. As a result of the extensive opportunities they are given, students are very well prepared for the

next stage in their education.

- Independent external surveys and the response to Parent View indicate that parents are extremely positive about the school and almost all felt they were well informed about their child's progress.
- The representative from the local authority was strong in her praise of the leadership of the school and in particular, the way that they support other schools, both formally and informally, in improving teaching and learning. For example, the school is now sponsoring another academy and is working with them to strengthen teaching and learning. Middle leaders from The King John School regularly coach and support teachers and middle leaders. In a very short time the impact has been tangible.
- The school's arrangement for safeguarding meet statutory requirements.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are totally committed to the school. They have a range of skills and experience and contribute their expertise regularly and systematically. They have also undertaken a number of training sessions and ongoing development activities. They enjoy good, open communication with the school and feel fully informed. As a result, they know how achievement compares to other schools and they have supported and challenged the school to address specific issues. The governing body is aware of the regular cycle of monitoring teaching linked to staff professional development and appraisal. They ensure that teachers only move up the pay scales when targets are met. They have a strategic overview of pupil premium spending and know that it is used effectively. Governors describe the financial management of the school as 'sound and prudent'. They ensure that statutory requirements are met, including those relating to safeguarding.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136577
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	425395

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
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	1971
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	370
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Barry Newman
Headteacher	Doctor Margaret Wilson
Date of previous school inspection	16 October 2008
Telephone number	01702 558284
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