

Kings Grove School

Buchan Grove, Crewe, Cheshire, CW2 7NQ

Inspection dates

16–17 October 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement requires improvement. The progress students make over their time in the school is not rapid enough, particularly in English and mathematics.
- More-able students do not always reach the higher grades of which they are capable in GCSE examinations.
- There is too much variability in the quality of writing and presentation in students' books and they do not always respond to the teachers' feedback to improve their work.
- Although much improved, the proportion of good teaching has not been consistent enough over time to fully compensate for previous underachievement.
- Developments in the skills of leaders and managers have strengthened the school's capacity to improve but its strategic leadership is not yet good overall.

The school has the following strengths

- The leadership and development of teaching and learning is emerging as a key strength. Leaders' evaluations of teaching are accurate and relate closely to the need for teachers to demonstrate that all students make good progress.
- Leaders and staff have worked successfully to improve their skills and are committed to further improvement for the benefit of all students and the school's community.
- Behaviour and safety are good. Students feel safe in school and their behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved since the last inspection.
- Staff know their students well and relationships are positive. Good levels of care and support are provided for those students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 27 lessons, of which nine were joint observations with members of the school’s leadership team.
- Meetings were held with leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority. The views of students were gathered in informal meetings around the school and by talking about their work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account the 28 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and looked at a summary of the school’s own survey of parents’ views.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a wide range of policies and other documentation, including safeguarding policies, school evaluation and development plans, external reports on the school’s progress, records relating to behaviour and attendance and the school’s own data on current students’ attainment and progress.

Inspection team

Marguerite Murphy, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael McLachlan	Additional Inspector
Derek Barnes	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

Information about this school

- Kings Grove School is an 11 to 16 Co-operative Foundation School. It is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds. A much lower than average proportion come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds and few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are above average.
- A well-above average proportion of students are known to be eligible for the pupil premium. (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after.)
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school does not make use of any off-site alternative provision.
- When the school was last inspected in March 2012 it was judged to be inadequate and placed in special measures. The school received three monitoring visits by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to report on its progress. This inspection was the outcome of its fourth monitoring visit.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build on the strong improvements in the quality of teaching to ensure that teaching across the school is consistently at least good in all subjects and year groups by:
 - providing opportunities for teachers to learn from the considerable best practice that already exists in the school in order to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching
 - ensuring teachers' assessments of students' attainment and progress are robust and accurate and that this information is used effectively to closely match work to the needs of students in all ability groups.
- Improve achievement, ensuring that a higher proportion of students meets and exceeds the nationally expected rates of progress across a wide range of subjects and particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - reviewing and adjusting where necessary the appropriate provision for groups of students at risk of underachieving, to make the best possible impact on their learning and progress
 - developing further the whole-school approach to improving students' literacy and numeracy skills across a wide range of subjects
 - pursuing the school's drive to raise students' aspirations and self-motivation to want to achieve the best they can.

- Develop further the skills of leaders at all levels to secure leadership and management that is consistently at least good by:
 - ensuring that internal monitoring arrangements lead to increased robustness and accuracy of information on students' progress across year groups and subsequently the school's predictions of future examination outcomes
 - embedding the improvements already made in self-evaluation and development planning to allow time for leaders' future actions to be carefully considered, concerted and effective in the longer term.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is below and sometimes well below average. An average proportion of students leave the school having achieved at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C, as performance across the wider range of subjects is generally stronger than in English and mathematics.
- Despite the 6% increase in 2013, a lower than average proportion of students achieve five GCSE grades at A* to C with both English and mathematics included. This is because not all students make the progress that is expected of them, and few make better than expected progress from their individual starting points.
- Differences in the attainment and progress of students who are or are not eligible for pupil premium funding was narrowed in 2013, to a difference of around half a GCSE grade in English and mathematics. There are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls, or in the progress made by those who speak English as an additional language. The relatively small proportion of students from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds achieve similarly to their peers.
- The achievement of disabled students or those with special educational needs is also similar to that of other learners, although in some cases their progress is good, due to the targeted support provided to meet their academic or social and emotional needs.
- The proportion of more-able students reaching the highest grades A* and A has not been good enough over time when taking into account their starting points, although there are signs that this is improving due to better planning and teaching to meet their needs. In some of the best lessons, for example, higher-attaining students worked independently and collaboratively in challenging tasks involving research and problem solving. The school makes use of early entry to some GCSE subjects but does not allow this to limit students' opportunities to achieve the highest grades.
- Many students are now making good progress in the majority of lessons, although some struggle to catch up when there are gaps in their basic literacy and numeracy skills. However, they are beginning to benefit from the school's drive to raise the profile of reading, including more regular opportunities to increase their enjoyment and confidence in reading.
- Some students lack the motivation and self-belief to achieve to their full potential in lessons and over time. The school recognises this and is committed to remedying it by exploring further opportunities to raise the aspirations of all students.
- Despite the overall picture of achievement that requires improvement, many students particularly enjoy and achieve well in a number of subjects across the curriculum such as sport, business studies and performing arts.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The majority of teaching is now good although this has not been the case for a sufficient length of time to have the desired effect on students' learning. Improvement is required because the teaching that is good or better is not consistently seen across the school in most subjects.
- There are clearly a growing number of examples of best practice in good and outstanding lessons that can be disseminated as teachers are keen to share and develop their skills. The school is aware of the need to capitalise on this and look at ways of providing further opportunities to learn from each other.
- Teaching in smaller groups of lower-ability students is not always as successful as it could be, for example if limited verbal responses are accepted from the students and they are not pushed to explain themselves more clearly. Lessons that require improvement can be over-directed by the teacher without sufficient thought given to planning tasks that stretch students' of all abilities to progress in their learning and independence.

- Many teachers apply the school's marking policy and expectations well, so that students are aware of how well they are doing and what they must do to reach the next level or grade. This has the biggest impact when students are expected to respond to teachers' detailed marking comments and given time to do so. However, teachers do not always follow this up by checking and commenting on how well the student has acted upon specific suggestions to improve their work.
- Teachers plan to include opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, although in practice these are not always utilised. However, opportunities to promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are successfully incorporated into many lessons.
- In the best lessons students make good or outstanding progress because teachers use their knowledge of individual students' abilities to plan activities and focus their questioning and feedback extremely well. For example, one group of Year 9 students made excellent progress to develop badminton skills in a short time while another group really pushed themselves to develop an energetic sequence of sports activities.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school has worked hard to monitor and improve students' behaviour and attendance since the last inspection. This, and the improving quality of teaching, has had a positive impact on students' attitudes to learning. Students say they feel safe at school, and that issues are dealt with if they have any worries or concerns.
- A common feature of many lessons is the positive relationships between staff and students. Friendly banter sometimes contributes to their enjoyment of learning and students would not take advantage of this because of the respect they have for the teachers. They arrive punctually to lessons and are ready to learn.
- Students are well-informed about how to keep themselves safe, for example through regular assembly or tutorial themes and as part of the curriculum in matters such as E-Safety. Most attend regularly, although the school is keen to improve attendance to above national average levels, and all absences are closely followed up and the reasons checked.
- Students conduct themselves well in lessons and in and around the school building. They understand the school's expectations of their behaviour and learning and feel that rewards and sanctions are applied fairly. The majority of parents agree that students are well behaved.
- The very small minority of students who find it difficult to meet the school's higher expectations are monitored closely and given every opportunity and support to improve their behaviour.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have demonstrated the capacity to bring about improvement since the school's last inspection. From a relatively slow start, the pace of development increased to the point at which the school no longer requires significant external support in order to sustain the improvements being made. The impact of the significant changes has yet to be fully demonstrated in an upward trend in students' achievement.
- Strong leadership of teaching and learning has extended beyond one or two leaders to include a team of staff who are committed to developing their own practice and that of others to embed best practice and ensure that students' achievement rises as a result. Underperformance is tackled and good and outstanding teaching are appropriately recognised and acknowledged.
- The work of teachers is checked through lesson observations and scrutiny of students' books. However, internal monitoring of students' progress across year groups is not always sufficiently accurate to provide clear predictions of future examination outcomes.
- The school uses its pupil premium and Year 7 'catch-up' funding appropriately, towards ensuring that those students eligible for free school meals and those who enter with below average

attainment in English and mathematics have equal opportunities to succeed in their learning. Strategies range from providing additional support or resources for learning to funding educational trips and visits that provide experiences students may not usually receive.

- Leaders are aware of the need to develop further the robustness of their assessment and tracking procedures and ensure that valid and reliable data are accessible in lessons. Although the performance of groups of students is routinely analysed, it is less specific in evaluating the impact of targeted support and pupil premium or 'catch up' funding.
- Performance management and staff appraisal arrangements have recently been reviewed by leaders and the governing body in line with national requirements. Expectations for teachers are linked to the school's priorities and the nationally expected standards for teachers and their salary progression.
- There is a suitable range of subjects and courses available to students and these are enhanced by a good range of well-attended extra-curricular opportunities. There are good links with primary schools that support transition into Year 7. A link with South Cheshire College has promoted the 'honours programme' for gifted and talented students.
- The school provides appropriately for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is considered carefully in subject areas and incorporated in a wide range of activities. An audit and review of provision is planned to identify aspects that could be developed further.
- The school was aware of variability in the leadership of some subjects over time and has taken action to start to remedy this, with one or two key staffing appointments being made recently.
- The local authority's role has been effective in supporting and monitoring the school since it was placed in special measures. The governing body has appreciated the challenge and advice it has received through the process, for example through the scrutiny committee meetings, alongside Trust members and educational partners.
- The school is developing further the quality of its communication and consultation with students and their families, for example in setting up parent and student forums using Co-operative Trust principles. Staff are committed to working in partnership with parents and keeping them well informed about the school's work.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body offers a good level of challenge to the work of the school. The role and impact of governance is expanding as new skills and experience are reflected in the membership of the governing body. Governors are aware of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement, including in the quality of teaching and use of data on the school's performance. They have appropriate key roles and responsibilities, for example, that support and monitor the school's good arrangements for safeguarding students and meeting the needs of those with special educational needs. The governing body has a good awareness of the use and impact of pupil premium funding but is less well informed on the Year 7 catch-up funding allocation.

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	111442
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	424361

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	650
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tom Dunlop
Headteacher	Trevor Langston
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2012
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