

Kennet School

Stoney Lane, Thatcham, RG19 4LL

Inspection dates

5–6 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The progress made by groups of students, particularly those eligible for the pupil premium and those supported at school action, has been much slower than other students at the school over the past two years.
- Over time, teaching in some subject areas has not enabled students to make good progress.
- The percentage of students achieving five GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics has declined over time and is now average.
- Some teachers do not mark the students' work regularly or thoroughly and therefore some students are not always clear about what they need to do to improve.
- The whole school tracking and monitoring of students' progress over time has not always led to students receiving appropriate support for their learning and consequently some groups of students have not made good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and the governing body have made significant changes to the senior and middle leadership team and their actions in the past year are already having a positive impact on teaching and students' achievement.
- The sixth form is good. It offers a range of courses and attainment at both AS and A level is above the national average.
- The additional provision is good and consequently students with a statement of special educational needs make good progress.
- The behaviour of students throughout the school is good. They respect each other and there are very positive relationships between teachers and students. Of the students who were interviewed, all feel safe at the school and understand how to protect themselves.
- The school offers a wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities which are valued highly by the students. As a result, students enjoy coming to school and actively participate in a range of leadership roles.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 52 parts of lessons, including nine lessons which were jointly observed by inspectors and school leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 119 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and analysed questionnaires from 146 members of staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including those relating to the school's evaluation of its own effectiveness, safeguarding and students' assessment information, as well as examples of students' work.
- They held discussions with representatives from the governing body, staff and groups of students.

Inspection team

Helen Matthews, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Joseph Skivington	Additional Inspector
Colin Money	Additional Inspector
Joan McVittie	Additional Inspector
Howard Dodd	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kennet School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Kennet School converted to become an academy school on 1 April 2011. When its predecessor school, Kennet School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be outstanding.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services) is below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- No students attend an off-site provision.
- There is a physically disabled resource and a hearing impaired unit offering specialist provision.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school has been entering some students for GCSE mathematics at different points during the course.
- A small minority of students in the current Year 7 have access to Year 7 catch-up funding.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that marking consistently provides students with advice on how they can improve their work across all subjects and year groups.
- Ensure that recent whole-school initiatives aimed at improving the achievement of students in receipt of the pupil premium grant and those on school action have an impact on their progress and attainment across all year groups and subjects.
- Improve the whole-school tracking of the progress and attainment of all students, but particularly those in receipt of the pupil premium grant, to ensure that appropriate interventions across all year groups and subjects are in place and that the impact of this on students' progress is closely and strategically monitored by senior leaders.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' attainment on entry to the school is average. Students do not make good progress so by the time they leave school, at the end of Year 11, the proportion of students achieving five or more grade A* to C GCSEs, including English and mathematics, is average.
- Over the past two years, the gap in attainment between the group of students eligible for the pupil premium and their peers has increased significantly. In 2013, there was one and a half grades difference between this group and that of their peers in English and mathematics. Equally, the gap in progress for this group compared to other students in the school has widened significantly.
- Similarly, the gap in attainment between the group of students supported by school action and their peers has also increased significantly. Leaders are using the pupil premium funding to provide smaller classes in English and mathematics at Key Stage 4, extra provision such as homework club and individual support, plus a range of extra-curricular opportunities. They have also introduced an individual 'challenge plan' for every student eligible for pupil premium funding which should ensure that appropriate support for learning is available and have begun to track students' progress. However, this work is at an early stage of development.
- While approximately one third of subjects were above average for A* to C grades, some key areas including English and French were below.
- The proportion of students making three or more levels of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in English has fluctuated over the past two years. Performance data and students' work presented by the school all show that the current rate of progress has improved.
- The proportion of students making three or more levels of progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 in mathematics has been consistently above average.
- The school entered a small cohort of students for mathematics in November and this had a positive impact on results for high ability students.
- Over time, progress and attainment on AS- and A-level courses in the sixth form have been consistently above average.
- Progress and attainment in all key stages including the sixth form for the most able students have been above average.
- Following the appointment of a new senior leader, there is now a drive to improve students' reading, writing and communication skills across the curriculum. The school has implemented a range of interventions and these are already beginning to have an impact on students' learning. There is a busy and thriving library that organises high profile events to enthuse students to read and as a result, students were keen to discuss their reading.
- The group of students eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding have made good progress in their reading and mathematics, particularly those who are also eligible for pupil premium funding.
- The progress and attainment of disabled students and those with a statement of special educational needs was significantly higher than the national average. Students who attend provision in the physically disabled resource and hearing impaired unit make very good progress.
- The majority of parents and carers who responded to Parent View were very pleased with the progress made by their children.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not enabled some students, particularly those eligible for pupil premium funding and those supported by school action, to make good progress.
- Teaching over time in some subject areas has resulted in attainment that has been below average.
- In some lessons, day-to-day work is not regularly or thoroughly marked and as a result, students

are not sure what they need to do to improve it. Equally, some teachers do not give students opportunities to actively respond to their comments.

- Whole-school strategic tracking of students' progress has not always resulted in effective or timely learning support for some individuals or particular groups of students.
- In those lessons where students make good progress, teachers' expert subject knowledge and their understanding of students' prior knowledge enables them to plan appropriately engaging and challenging activities that encourage students to actively explore and discuss key issues around their learning. Students' work shows high levels of good quality written expression and in some subject areas, clear advice from the teacher of how students could improve.
- For instance, in an English lesson, students were asked to analyse an unfamiliar poem in small groups and then the teacher, taking feedback from students, modelled how to write an A* answer using appropriate terminology; this helped students to make good progress.
- In a film theatre studies lesson, students rehearsed in groups, critically advising each other in order to improve their performance skills in a focused and safe environment, while the teacher provided individual mentoring and advice.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Lessons are well planned and resourced, with students encouraged to lead their own learning. As a result, students are clearly engaged and driven to make very good progress in a safe learning environment.
- The school employs a large group of effective teaching assistants who are deployed either to work with individual students who have a statement of educational need or to work within specific subject areas.
- There is a huge range of high-quality, extra-curricular activities on offer and the high participation rates demonstrate the extremely positive student and staff relationships. Students and staff are not only keen to be involved, but dedicated, giving up time before and after school to pursue particular interests and put on a large range of performances.
- The teaching of those students who attend the physically disabled resource and hearing impaired unit is good, both within the units and in lessons they attend in the main school.
- The vast majority of those who responded to Parent View believe that their child is taught well at school.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students both in lessons and around the school is good. They show respect and courtesy towards each other, their teachers and the school environment and are keen to support each other's learning. They work very well together, listening carefully to the views of others and sharing their knowledge and understanding.
- The school promotes positive relationships and students are encouraged to work with each other across year groups within a very effective house system that encourages competition in a safe environment. Students act as mentors and prefects, supporting younger students and visitors to the school; for instance, pupils from Years 4 to 6 who attend music tuition sessions as part of a nationally acclaimed transition scheme.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students from the physically disabled resource and hearing impaired unit are fully included in the school community and all students are actively encouraged to celebrate differences and diversity. As a result, staff and students are keen to promote equality of opportunity both in lessons and through extra-curricular sport, and cultural and performance activities. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and is extremely rare.
- Attendance has been above average for the past three years.
- Students report that they have very positive relationships with their teachers, that they feel supported and that they value what their teachers have done for them.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions within the school is below average and school data indicate

that behaviour has continued to improve over time.

- Students commented that bullying in any form is extremely rare but they would know what to do if they saw any bullying or were bullied. Students say that they feel safe in school and that heads of house and senior leaders through assemblies, registration and personal, social and health education (PSHE) have made them aware of issues such as e-safety and how they can keep themselves safe.
- Of those that responded to Parent View the majority feel that the school makes sure its students are well behaved and that the school deals effectively with bullying.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and governing body has recently made significant changes to both the senior and middle leadership team and as a result, the quality of teaching across subjects is now consistently more effective and current performance data presented by the school indicate that gaps in achievement, particularly for some groups of students, will be minimised this year.
- The headteacher has high expectations and a clear vision for the school and as a consequence, is well regarded by staff, students, parents and carers and the governing body.
- Middle leaders are well supported and are committed to providing a wide range of learning opportunities for students both in and out of the classroom.
- There is a robust performance management system in place with individual teacher targets linked to the whole-school development plan.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good. Leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and have made changes that are already having a positive impact on the quality of provision; for instance, the curriculum has been broadened to allow better progression for more able students, and large numbers are now following BTEC courses.
- Leadership of the physically disabled resource and hearing impaired unit is good.
- School leaders have worked hard to build strong relationships within the local community and particularly with local primary schools and this is reflected in the very positive comments on Parent View and on staff questionnaires.
- The school's promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through assemblies, the PSHE programme and lessons is very good.
- The academic curriculum meets the needs of most students.
- While there is a whole-school system of tracking students, the focus on tracking effort more regularly than progress means that analysis of potential underperformance is limited to the effectiveness of individual subject leaders and, at times, means that timely intervention for particular students or groups of students is not as effective as it could be.
- Senior leaders have an understanding of the strengths and areas for development for the school.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body has a very good grasp of the strengths and areas for development of the school. It works well with senior leaders and at times, has challenged the headteacher, particularly with regard to the progress and attainment of some student groups, including those eligible for pupil premium funding and those supported at school action.
- Governors regularly visit the school and classrooms and understand how the school rewards good teachers and have fully supported the headteacher to deal with underperformance.
- The governing body has supported the headteacher to create the multi-academy trust.
- The governing body is clear about its role in holding the school to account and its statutory duties relating to students' safety and as a result, safeguarding requirements are met.
- The governing body understands how the pupil premium funding is being spent and the impact on students' current progress this year.

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	136647
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	441260

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	1823
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	403
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Smith
Headteacher	Paul Dick
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01635 862121
Email address	office@kennetschool.co.uk

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