

Kingsdown School

Hyde Road, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon, SN2 7SH

Inspection dates 15–16 July 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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

- Since the previous inspection, students have made too little progress so they have not achieved as well as they should have done. Standards are not high enough.
- Students eligible for additional funding make less progress than other students, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Boys do not do as well as girls in the majority of subjects.
- The most-able students do not achieve their full potential. In 2012 and 2013, the percentage of high GCSE grades was below, or well below, average in most subjects.
- A small minority of students do not read well enough to tackle work confidently.
- Teaching is inconsistent within and between subjects. It is not yet good enough for all students to make rapid progress.
- Governors, and senior and middle leaders, did not focus enough on improving students' progress in the past. Their checks on the effectiveness of actions taken to boost progress were not sharp enough,
- The right changes to checks on how well students are doing, and the actions taken, have yet to have a major impact on students' progress in all subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- Students feel safe and behave well. They are polite and get on well together. In most lessons, they work hard and are keen to learn.
- Learning and emotional support is good for students based in the autistic spectrum centre and other students with special educational needs.
- Provision for students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- After the previous inspection, governors and senior leaders moved into a higher gear. This gathered momentum from September 2013.
- There is convincing evidence that progress and standards have steadily got better since January 2014.
- The quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of middle leaders, have improved in the last 12 months.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed over 40 part-lessons, several jointly with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed assemblies, tutor sessions and extra-curricular activities.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work, other staff with positions of responsibility, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents. These included the school's own evaluation of its work, improvement plans and data about past and present progress, standards, exclusions, attendance and behaviour. The lead inspector read the November 2013 review of the governors' work and heard a summary of a review of the school's work for students receiving additional funding from the consultant who had written it.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students' work in lessons and at other times.
- Inspectors took into account 68 responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and questionnaires completed by 28 members of staff.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Janet Allcorn	Additional Inspector
Peter Barnes	Additional Inspector
Janet Hallett	Additional Inspector
Julie Summerfield	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- Over 90% of students are White British with very small percentages from several different minority ethnic groups. A below-average proportion of students speak English as an additional language; almost none is at an early stage of learning English.
- A below-average proportion of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children and students known to be eligible for free school meals. The school has a small number of looked after children.
- An increasing number of Year 7 students (45 in 2012/2013) are eligible for catch-up funding, which is for pupils who did not attain Level 4 in mathematics or reading in primary school.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is just below the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The school has a unit for 15 students on the autistic spectrum. The Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) centre is the local authority centre for these students.
- The school uses alternative, mostly part-time, off-site education provision for a small number of students in Years 10 and 11. Students attend the Riverside Centre and Swindon College for work-related courses in, for example, hair and beauty, engineering and hospitality.
- The school employs three trained mentors to support students with their behaviour, anxieties or career plans. In school, they are known as commissioned officers.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase consistency in teaching to generate more rapid progress by:
 - making sure that students reflect and act upon the advice they receive about how to make their work better
 - ensuring that students have understood new work before moving on
 - encouraging students to think in depth and give reasons for their answers
 - stimulating students' interest in work and, where possible, showing how it is relevant to their lives or topical issues
 - focusing on improving students' numeracy skills in more lessons.
- Improve students' progress in all subjects so that:
 - those eligible for additional funding make the same progress as other students
 - more boys do as well as girls
 - all students achieve their full potential and, particularly the most able, attain at least an average percentage of high GCSE grades.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - identifying students who are underachieving or likely to underachieve as early as possible
 - using succinct, summary checks on students' work to decide whether initiatives to improve their progress are working or not, and change them if necessary
 - sharing any good practice which is proven to improve progress across the school.
- Implement, as fast as is practical, the recommendations of the recent, external reviews of the governors' work and the school's support for students eligible for additional funding.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- The Year 11 students taking GCSEs in 2013 entered the school with slightly above-average standards which were not reflected in their results. The percentage of pass grades was well below average in several subjects including science taken by 160 students.
- Very few students, particularly the most able, achieved their full potential. The percentage of high, A* and A grades was below, or well below, average in most subjects, for example in English and mathematics.
- Boys, especially those with low standards on entry, made far less progress in 2013 and achieved fewer GCSE pass and high grades than girls.
- In 2013, students eligible for additional funding attained about two GCSE grades lower than other students in English and mathematics. The gap was greater than it had been in 2012. Most of these students made even less progress than others.
- Based on their starting points, lower-attaining students made reasonably good progress in English, but the most-able students did not. In mathematics, lower-attaining students made poor progress.
- Most of the very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds attain better GCSE results and make more progress than White British students.
- Practically all the students based in the ASC centre make good progress in both academic and social skills. Those supported at school action plus or with statements of special educational needs matched the progress made by these students nationally.
- Some students' progress is held back because several of them (just under one in five students in Years 7 to 9) have reading comprehension ages below their actual ages.
- A few students in the lower sets in mathematics struggle with basic skills and times tables, and make slow progress. Some lower sets, in modern foreign languages for example, have over 30 students, which contributes to underachievement when teaching is not skilful.
- After a dip in 2012, GCSE results recovered in 2013 with 60% of students attaining five A*-C grades including English and mathematics, matching the national average.
- Based on results from examinations sat early, GCSE results are set to improve in 2014. Other contributing factors include far more consistent checking on students' progress, better teaching and teachers' resolve to shift things dramatically.
- The progress of all students eligible for additional funding is moving closer to that made by other students. The gap in GCSE mathematics and English results is predicted to be smaller than it was in the last two years. Boys are doing better in all years.
- The school's mentors visit students studying off-site to check how they are getting on. The school receives regular updates on their progress from the colleges. Most achieve well and acquire useful practical skills.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Inconsistencies in teaching, which still exist within and between subjects, explain why most students have not learned well enough since the previous inspection. The amount of good teaching is not enough for students to make rapid progress.
- Observations of learning in lessons by inspectors, and evidence from students' books over time, show that teaching requires improvement because of one or more of the following features:
 - students do not reflect and act upon the advice they receive on how to make their work better
 - there are limited checks, particularly in mathematics and science, that students have understood new work before moving on
 - students are allowed to get away with superficial answers which require one-word answers

- without reasons and are not encouraged to think deeply
- work fails to ignite students' interest so that students do it without any commitment or involvement
- over emphasis on working just to get higher levels rather than making explicit to students how, for example, the lesson content is relevant to their lives or topical issues.
- The promotion of numeracy skills requires improvement as this would support students' progress in mathematics, particularly mental calculation skills. Nevertheless, entering selected students early for GCSE was not a significant factor in the overall results. Results in GCSE statistics taken by the most able are well above average (as are those in religious education).
- Improving students' reading was not tackled quickly enough in the past. Effective practices used by the special educational needs department are now being used with all weak readers. An increasing number of teachers check on students' understanding of key words and focus on showing them how to structure paragraphs and write well.
- Support in lessons for students with special educational needs, including those based in the ASC centre, is mostly good. Several teaching assistants are skilled at asking probing questions and knowing when to stand back if a student is working successfully without help.
- Consistently good teaching is more evident as teachers are resolved to make it happen. Positive comments in English books, such as 'Excellent inference' alongside constructive advice, inspire students to keep improving their work.
- Recently introduced seating plans which identify what individual students know, understand and can do have helped the most-able students move on fast while lower attainers confidently tackle what they are given. This is particularly true for mixed ability classes.
- In music, practising lines of tango music matched to students' keyboard skills meant that all of them enjoyed making progress. A discussion with the most-able students during a geography lesson ensured they structured their written work with fluency. Well-planned physical education lessons, blending technique development with practice, motivate many students to participate in extra-curricular sports.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attendance is in the top 20% of schools nationally, which reflects how much they enjoy coming to school.
- The behaviour of students is good. They respect their environment and are, rightly, trusted to be sensible. Relationships between teachers and students are respectful, generating a good atmosphere in many lessons.
- A sharper behaviour policy led to an increase in fixed-term exclusions. Numbers are now low, though students with special educational needs are still more likely to be excluded than others.
- Students work well together and listen respectfully to each other. The majority write neatly and take pride in the presentation of their work.
- Behaviour is no better than good because, although rare, low-level disruption occasionally interrupts lessons. Students are keen to learn, but some of them find it difficult to concentrate if they cannot see the point of a lesson.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. All safeguarding and child protection procedures are followed meticulously. Students in the ASC centre and others with particular needs receive effective emotional guidance and support from heads of year, teaching assistants and learning mentors.
- Students know that discrimination is not tolerated. Incidents of bullying decrease as students become older. The students the inspectors met could not recall any incident that was not dealt with promptly. Students know that bullying takes many forms and they discuss homophobic and cyber-bullying, and the dangers of social media, realistically.
- Students are enthusiastic about the numerous ways in which they can take on responsibilities

and develop their leadership skills; they carry out these roles well.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Senior leaders and governors have only faced up to the degree of underachievement following the previous inspection and the 2013 results. Teachers fairly accurately predicted whether students' 2013 targets would be met. Initiatives to make progress better failed to generate rapid improvements.
- Senior leaders and governors have focused more on headline figures rather than on whether students should have done better. In 2013, the well-above-average percentage of students attaining grade C or higher in English language and literature was celebrated, but the percentage of high grades was very low.
- When middle leaders observe teaching, they concentrate on what teachers are doing rather than on students' learning and progress over time. The training provided for teachers' professional development is good but not sharply focused on the key elements of teaching needing improvement.
- Senior leaders carry out reviews of subjects but their summary reports do not distil their findings into key points for improvement.
- The deputy headteacher, who efficiently collects information about students' progress, acknowledges that the computer program used in the past was not as effective as the one introduced recently. Some teachers and year heads already use the new program successfully to guide their work. Occasionally, senior leaders do not refine information to identify patterns and what to tackle immediately.
- Documents reflecting on how well the school is doing are too rosy but, in reality, senior leaders know what needs to be done. This is reflected in their improvement plans which highlight the right actions needed.
- The headteacher and senior leadership team's energy and determination to improve have emerged forcefully in the last 12 months. One significant step forward, reflecting the school's secure capacity to improve, was the detailed external review of senior leaders' work with students eligible for additional funding, arranged by senior leaders. The report gives very clear advice on what must be done and senior leaders are resolved to implement the recommendations.
- Staff's work is now closely linked to how well the students they teach do. Pay rises based on performance have been held back where necessary. Underperforming teachers have been supported to improve; some have chosen to leave.
- Changes to staffing since the previous inspection have been significant. They have included several new teachers, two heads of year and many new middle leaders. When the 2014/2015 academic year starts, only two middle leaders will have been in post for more than two years and the mathematics department will be fully staffed by specialists.
- Middle leaders are now fully aware that they must keep a careful eye on different groups of students' progress. This has contributed to most students, particularly those eligible for additional funding and boys, making better progress. In addition, intensive pre-GCSE revision sessions took place in 2013.
- The relatively new special educational needs coordinator has introduced programmes which have significantly improved some individual students' reading. Other successful actions have included contacting parents and carers in primary schools, meeting them off-site if they prefer and carrying out Year 7 skills tests early on. The school has introduced other ways to encourage parents and carers to be involved in their children's education, for example by putting small stickers into the students' books which parents and carers sign to show they have looked at the work.
- Students in the ASC centre are well integrated, being in lessons for 90% of their time in school. This reflects the school's promotion of equality of opportunity and its fostering of good relationships.

- The school gives students good advice about their futures and practically all of them, including those with special educational needs and ASC centre students, proceed to further education or training.
- The curriculum is good. Work-related qualifications taught off-site support students with special educational needs' education effectively. The school changes its curriculum offer to respond to students' abilities and interests. In addition to trips and visits, students participate in a large number of activities, particularly in sports, at the end of the school day.
- All students follow the Certificate of Personal Effectiveness programme; most attain the qualification. This, combined with assemblies, tutor periods and well-planned personal development enrichment days, extend students' awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues most effectively.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors acknowledge that progress became the school's 'key point' only a couple of years ago. They realise that it has taken a while to address inadequate middle leadership and teaching. They support the headteacher's robust stance on underperforming staff. They know that staff only receive pay rises when their performance is good enough.
 - Governors are aware that students' progress and high GCSE grades compare poorly against national and similar schools' results. They also realise that they should probe the information they receive about the quality of teaching in the light of results.
 - The fact that governors welcomed the local authority's review of their work shows their determination to move forward, combining support with focused challenge. For example, to query whether any additional funds are spent effectively or whether early entry for GCSEs serves all students well. Governors ensure that all safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures are in place and reviewed regularly.

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	137265
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	431105

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,245
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Hazelton
Headteacher	Wendy Conaghan
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2012
Telephone number	01793 822284
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