

Kirkbie Kendal School

Lound Road, Kendal, Cumbria, LA9 7EQ

Inspection dates

23–24 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher provides strong direction and staff set high expectations for students.
- Good leadership at all levels has secured good teaching and achievement.
- Some aspects of leadership are outstanding, including the promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and pastoral support.
- Procedures to keep students safe and the behaviour of students are outstanding. Students' excellent attitudes to learning mean they make the most of the opportunities offered.
- Students are respectful and considerate towards each other. They feel extremely safe and secure in school.
- Good teaching helps students build on their knowledge and skills.
- Students make good progress from their starting points overall. The most able students make the most rapid progress and achieve high grades.
- Attainment at GCSE is average or above average in most subjects.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students' achievement has risen significantly as the result of a concerted effort by all staff to improve teaching.
- Sixth form students make an excellent contribution to the school.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Students in the lower ability sets do not always make the same rapid progress as others because teaching is not as highly effective as it is in higher ability groups.
- Students who are supported through pupil premium do not achieve as well as other students with the same starting points in school and all students nationally.
- Not all tutor times are used as effectively as they could be.
- The quality of marking is variable. It does not always resolve misunderstandings or lead to improvement.
- New initiatives to provide additional support to students who are falling behind do not provide targets that are precise enough to help them catch-up or enable teachers to check their progress.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and students' progress varies in quality between subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in most subjects and all year groups, including the sixth form. One lesson was observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors looked at students' work in lessons and scrutinised a range of work provided by the school. They also observed tutor sessions and an assembly.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, governors and teachers. Inspectors met with three groups of students and spoke with many more informally during lessons, study periods and break-times. They took account of 118 responses to the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View).
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documents, including self-evaluation, monitoring information and improvement planning. They analysed progress data and looked at a range of policies.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of a serious incident which occurred outside school, concerning a former pupil. The investigation carried out by the appropriate authorities had concluded by the time of this inspection. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, action taken by the school in response to the incident was considered alongside other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- Safeguarding procedures were looked at in-depth, as were procedures to promote students' well-being and keep them safe in school. Inspectors conducted several 'behaviour walks' around school at different times of the day.

Inspection team

Jean Olsson-Law, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Naomi Taylor	Additional Inspector
Marcia Harding	Additional Inspector
Osama Abdul Rahim	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Kirkbie Kendal is an averaged sized secondary school with a sixth form. It converted to an Academy in April 2011. The predecessor school was judged to be good at the last inspection.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students and those eligible for the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided to this school for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of students with special educational needs or disabilities supported through school action is average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- Very few students are from minority ethnic groups and virtually all speak English as their first language.
- The sixth form includes students who attended other schools in the area for their 11 to 16 education.
- A small number of students are educated off-site to enable them to pursue courses of their choice. Fifteen Year 11 students attend Kendal College for one day a week, one student is pursuing level 2 qualifications, one has additional music tuition and one has additional football training.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE.
- The school meets the current government floor standards which are minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The school is a partner in the South Lakes Federation of Schools, a member of the Kendal collaborative and a strategic partner in the South lakes Teaching School partnership. It is a centre of excellence for geography. There are three specialist leaders in education and a specialist leader trainer.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure lower ability students and those who are eligible for pupil premium funding make more rapid progress from their starting points by:
 - making sure additional support is planned and monitored effectively across subjects and sets clear targets for academic improvement
 - ensuring that teaching is as highly effective in lower ability sets as it is in higher ability sets
 - making sure learning progress mentors and teaching assistants have a clear role in lessons.
- Improve teaching further by:
 - ensuring that teaching tackles any misunderstandings and helps fill gaps in students' knowledge, especially in the lower ability sets
 - ensuring marking supports students to improve by giving clear guidance and allowing them opportunities to respond and correct errors
 - making better use of tutor time to support learning.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of teaching always provides clear feedback to teachers to support improvement.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides strong direction with clear lines of accountability so all staff know what is expected. Leaders at all levels have high expectations of students and are ambitious for the school. Self-evaluation identifies strengths and areas for development.
- Some aspects of leadership are outstanding, including the leadership of pastoral support and promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvements to the sixth form have been driven through and implemented successfully, due to the concerted efforts of all staff and governors.
- Leadership is not yet outstanding as the highest level of achievement has not been sustained over time for all groups of students. Some initiatives have been introduced too recently to have had an impact, particularly those introduced to support disadvantaged students and those who have fallen behind in their learning. There are secure foundations on which to build further and the track record of improvement in focus areas indicates that leaders have strong capacity to secure further improvements.
- Teachers' performance is managed effectively. Professional development is linked with school priorities and has proved successful in improving the sixth form and in promoting literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects. There is a strong culture of support so teachers feel able to seek advice.
- Middle leaders have a good understanding of priorities for improvement and take an active role in school improvement. However, there is variability in the effectiveness of monitoring and self-evaluation. Feedback to teachers provides clear points for improvement in some subjects but is too vague in others. Additional support for students is not planned and monitored consistently, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- Students experience a broad and balanced range of subjects at all key stages, which ensures that they can pursue GCSE and sixth form courses best suited to their interests, aspirations and abilities. They receive excellent information, advice and guidance to help them make the right choices to succeed. A wealth of additional activities helps students develop broader skills and extends their learning. Lunch-time and after-school clubs, including chess, drama and sports are immensely popular.
- Partnership working with the South Lakes Federation of schools brings benefits to all partners, enabling staff from partner schools to share good practice and benefit from shared training. The school has productive links with primary feeder schools to ensure smooth transition.
- Parents who responded to Parent View are positive about the school. Virtually all feel their child is happy, well supported and makes good progress. Ninety-seven percent would recommend the school and feel the school is well led and managed.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a wide range of relevant expertise and a good understanding of the school's performance. They keep well informed through commissioning external reviews, regular reports from staff, discussion with students and a comprehensive understanding of data enabling them to set the school's performance against other schools.
 - Governors hold the headteacher and leaders to account thoroughly, asking probing questions and seeking further explanation appropriately. There are good systems to track students' progress. Salary progression is carefully considered and proceeds only where there is clear evidence to support it.
 - Governors have a good overview of pupil premium funding spending but are less clear about the impact that the employment of additional staff to support students in lessons or small groups is having. These developments are at early stages and the success criteria by which to judge impact are not identified clearly enough. The gaps between students eligible for pupil premium and others in the school are closing but are still too wide. Year 7 catch-up funding is used effectively to provide additional support.
 - Safeguarding procedures have been audited and are extremely secure. All staff and students in the sixth form have completed safeguarding training at Level 1 and the designated safeguarding leads have up to date training at Level 3. All requirements are met with regards to safer recruitment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students move about the school in a calm, orderly way, with utmost courtesy to each other and staff. They are extremely polite, and were always ready to talk to inspectors, including during break-times.
- Students' high level of motivation, their thirst for knowledge and keen desire to achieve their best is evident in virtually all lessons. Students have a mature attitude to discussion; they are keen to learn from each other and offer alternative views in a measured and reasoned way. Disruptive behaviour is extremely

rare and effective procedures are in place to ensure it does not get in the way of other students' learning.

- Students are sociable and friendly in outdoor areas. There is plenty of space and those who want to play sports organise themselves with consideration for others. The high level of adult supervision outside and around the school is appreciated by students and helps them to feel safe in all areas.
- Students make a positive contribution to the school in various leadership roles and uphold the behaviour code diligently. They look smart and take care of the environment.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students are friendly, caring and supportive. Their teachers have established excellent relationships; they help students develop excellent personal skills and achieve good academic standards.
- School leaders continually review and update safeguarding procedures, so that staff are very sure about what to do if they have concerns about a students' safety. Support for the most vulnerable students is excellent; it successfully helps students overcome barriers to learning and ensures their safety. The links with referral agencies have been enhanced to include regular meetings and ensure that information is shared and concerns are acted on quickly.
- Attendance is above average. Persistent absenteeism has continued to reduce, particularly amongst vulnerable students. Daily checks are made on the few students who attend alternative provision to make sure they have arrived safely.
- There has not been any permanent exclusion for a number of years. The use of fixed-term exclusion has reduced to below average levels, as a result of tighter behaviour management systems. The occasional use of 'time-out' from lessons is done constructively, ensuring that students finish the work they have been set in a supportive learning environment.
- Students who spoke with inspectors demonstrated a broad knowledge of the harmful effects of different types of bullying, including the use of derogatory language based on sexuality, appearance or race. They are clear that they do not tolerate bullying and would know who to look for in school if they felt anyone was being intimidated.
- A large number of students were spoken with informally and they were unequivocal in their view that they feel extremely safe in school. 'Everyone does their best to help each other and keep the school safe', was typical of their comments. Ninety-nine percent of parents who responded to Parent View say their child feels safe and the vast majority feel the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Diversity is celebrated across subjects. Students show the utmost respect for different faiths and cultures and reflect on the complexities of the modern world maturely. They are aware of the dangers of extremism and of stereotyping. Their appreciation of art and culture is enhanced through visits to galleries and trips abroad. Students discuss moral and ethical issues in depth in several subjects and readily apply their understanding to maintain a calm and supportive atmosphere across the school. They develop a range of skills to help them contribute fully to life in modern Britain.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm ensure that students enjoy learning and make good progress. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve and work hard to help them reach their potential.
- Teaching is highly effective in higher ability teaching groups where teachers' probing questioning and challenging activities promote higher-level thinking, problem solving and application of skills. This was seen in English, where students were encouraged to draw on their prior knowledge to draw parallels between the key themes in 'Macbeth' and 'Frankenstein's Monster'. In geography, the teacher's strong subject knowledge and excellent explanation ensured all students made excellent gains in their understanding of population policy in China.
- Teachers use a range of resources to stimulate interest and make links with students' prior learning. Relationships are extremely positive, so that students feel confident to contribute their views. Homework is planned carefully to build on students' understanding and encourage further research.
- Teachers are particularly good at engaging students in purposeful discussion that enables them to learn from each other. Students' communication and thinking skills are developed exceptionally well. However, their written work does not always reflect their high quality oral and practical work because expectations for the depth and quality of writing are not as clear.
- Marking is variable in and between subjects. Where it most successful, in geography and some English books, for example, teachers' timely comments help students extend their understanding. However, some comments are not specific enough to help students correct or improve their work. There are occasions

when work is not corrected and so errors are repeated, particularly in mathematics. Where comments are made, students do not always have opportunities to reflect on and apply advice.

- Reading and mathematical skills are developed successfully across a range of subjects. In Spanish, for example, every opportunity was taken to extend students' communicating and literacy skills. Where students struggle, they are given additional support which helps them to understand what they are reading and develop their reading and mathematical skills.
- There are a few occasions when students are not moved on quickly enough to new learning and have limited opportunity to explore ideas and learn from their peers. This is more likely to be the case in the lower ability groups.
- Tutor time is not used as purposefully as it could be. There are missed opportunities to extend students' learning or support improvement in their work during the 20 minutes allocated to tutor time four days a week.
- Students who have special educational needs or disabilities are supported well in additional support groups so they make good progress overall. There are times, however, when additional adults are not deployed effectively in lessons to support gains in academic achievement.
- The 'Learning progress mentors' who have been employed specifically to support students eligible for pupil premium provide similarly good support in individual and small group sessions. Their support is particularly helpful to promote organisational skills and raise self-esteem. However, as with teaching assistants, their role in lessons is not clear enough and the academic targets set for students' academic achievement lack precision.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students enter the school with broadly average attainment; they make at least expected progress from their starting points, and often do better than this, to achieve standards that are above average at GCSE in most subjects. In 2013, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs, including English and mathematics, at grade C or above was slightly above the national average. These standards were maintained in 2014.
- Students of all ability make good progress from their starting points in English. The proportion making expected progress in mathematics was below national in 2013 but increased significantly in 2014 following effective action to improve teaching and raise achievement.
- The most able students make the most rapid progress to achieve high grades at GCSE. They are provided with challenging work that extends their knowledge and skills very successfully.
- Students of middle and lower ability do not progress as rapidly as the most able students because teaching is not always as effective as it is in the higher ability groups. In some lower ability groups, there are gaps in students' knowledge and skills that are not attended to sufficiently, for example their knowledge of multiplication tables.
- Students with special educational needs or disabilities supported at school action are now making similarly good progress from their starting points. Leaders have taken effective action to make sure given additional support to help them catch up. Support in class is more variable in effectiveness.
- Leaders are taking effective action to ensure equal opportunities for students, foster good relations and tackle discrimination. Disadvantaged students, including those eligible for free school meals, were about one and a third grades behind others in school in English and mathematics in 2013. They achieved broadly in line with similar students nationally. This was a significant improvement from 2012, when the gaps were very wide. The gaps have continued to close in 2014.
- Students attending alternative provision make good progress in courses that are specifically tailored to their learning needs and aspirations.
- Students make excellent progress in humanities and the school is recognised as a centre of excellence for geography.

The sixth form provision

is outstanding

- The sixth form has improved significantly in the last three years, due to highly effective leadership and planning for improvement.
- Good and outstanding teaching enables the majority of students to make better than expected progress from their starting points. This extends to students taking vocational qualifications as well as those

pursuing 'A' levels.

- Students are highly motivated in lessons and during independent study periods. They are inspired by teachers' excellent subject knowledge and enjoy researching further into subjects. This gives them the in-depth knowledge they need to achieve higher grades.
- School data show that the proportion of students attaining higher A* to B grades at 'A' level increased significantly in 2014 and was above the 2013 national average. Disadvantaged students performed particularly well; there were no discernible gaps between their performance and others nationally.
- Students receive excellent information, advice and guidance prior to starting and during their time in the sixth form. This ensures they make the right choice from the broad range of subjects on offer and all progress to higher education, further education or employment. Careers evenings, work placements and university taster sessions help them to make the right choices on leaving the sixth form.
- The varied enrichment programme including the Duke of Edinburgh Award, various leadership teams, drama, sports and musical activities help students develop broader skills. Students are fully involved in supporting sports and science in primary schools and engaging in charity work. As well as benefiting the local community, students say these activities help them develop leadership and enterprise skills which are helpful in making applications to higher education and work.
- Sixth form students make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school; they are positive role models for younger students. They are keen to take up leadership responsibilities, for example, as learning or personal mentors for younger students, as enterprise and sports leaders.
- Students have a thorough understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They take their role in ensuring the safety of younger students very seriously; the vast majority have completed basic safeguarding and child protection training. They have made excellent contributions to the school's anti-bullying campaigns through assemblies and mentoring.

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	136671
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	448873

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	868
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	160
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nicola Crierie
Headteacher	Philip Hyman
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01539 727422
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