

Knowle DGE Learning Centre

Leinster Avenue, Bristol BS4 1NN

Inspection dates 4–5 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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.

- In this very well resourced school, pupils in all key stages make good progress and achieve well because they enjoy school and respond positively to adults' high expectations of them.
- Teaching is good. Teachers ensure that well planned lessons are interesting and related to everyday life, which help motivate pupils.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils are polite and increasingly thoughtful towards others. They try hard in lessons. Pupils feel safe and can explain how to keep safe in different situations.
- Leadership and management are good. Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained standards and has improved sixth form provision.
- Staff work closely as a team. Programmes of study include a wide range of popular work-related courses. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is encouraged well through out-of-school visits and the contributions of visitors, as well as through art and music.
- Governors know the school increasingly well, holding it to account effectively.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students in the sixth form are highly motivated and achieve very well. There is an excellent range of courses and students are exceptionally well supported.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Occasionally, work in lessons is not pitched at the right level of difficulty for different pupils. Sometimes, time is not used well to maintain a brisk pace of learning.
- On a few occasions, when speaking to the whole class, teachers do not ensure that other adults supporting in class do so effectively.
- Marking does not always show pupils how they can improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed eight lessons, two of these jointly with senior staff.
- Discussions were held with two groups of pupils and also with senior and middle leaders and other members of staff, members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors heard individual pupils read to them and heard pupils read aloud in class.
- There were not enough responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to provide evidence on parents' and carers' opinions. However, inspectors considered the results of a school questionnaire completed by parents and spoke to a small number of parents or relatives bringing their child to school.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including those relating to safeguarding, assessments of pupils' progress, records of attendance, the school's self-evaluation documents and development plans.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons where possible and at samples of pupils' work from across the school.

Inspection team

Michael Farrell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jo Curd

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Knowle DGE Learning Centre is a special school educating pupils who have different types of special educational needs, including behavioural, social and emotional difficulties, speech and language communication needs and moderate learning difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The local authority has a schedule to phase in education and health care plans, which will gradually replace these, but the transfer has not yet started.
- The majority of pupils receive support through the pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority). The proportion of eligible pupils is well above average.
- Some pupils in Year 7 are supported through additional funding to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.
- About one in five pupils is from a minority ethnic background. This is below the national average.
- The school has two bases in mainstream schools, one at Knowle Primary School and one for secondary-aged pupils at Brislington Enterprise College.
- Many pupils start at different times of the year to the usual admissions times.
- No pupils are entered early for GCSE examinations.
- There is a hostel on site providing short residential stays for pupils attending the school, but was not part of this inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, the then headteacher has been appointed as executive headteacher in connection with Knowle DGE and other schools. A new headteacher, who was previously the deputy headteacher, was formally appointed in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the overall quality of teaching to outstanding so that all pupils make rapid progress, by ensuring that:
 - pupils' work is always pitched at the right level of difficulty
 - time is always used effectively in lessons to maintain a brisk pace of learning
 - teachers' marking always provides clear guidance to pupils on how they can improve their work
 - adults who help students learn are always deployed well so that their support for pupils has the maximum impact.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher has the confidence of staff and governors. Senior and middle leaders contribute fully and the highly motivated staff are proud to work in the school.
- The quality of teaching is carefully checked by leaders, and areas for improvement are identified. This, coupled with very effective opportunities for professional development and rigorous systems for appraising staff, has sustained overall good teaching and improved sixth form provision.
- Leaders and middle managers convey to staff a clear sense of direction and ways to improve. This is aided by the school's accurate self-evaluation and effective plans for development.
- The school works effectively with other schools and agencies, such as the health services, to the benefit of its pupils. Links with parents are strong and one parent told the inspector that the staff 'listen to you'.
- Programmes of study are wide ranging and capture pupils' interests, encouraging literacy and numeracy skills well. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effectively encouraged through, for example, arts activities, day and residential trips, and strong links with a school in Kenya. The school is working well towards its preferred approach to assessment.
- Primary school physical education (PE) and sport funding is effectively used for equipment and widening opportunities, for example in swimming, contributing well to pupils' healthy lifestyles and increased participation.
- Extra funding for literacy and numeracy is also well used, for example to provide additional specialist resources. The majority of the pupils in the school receive pupil premium funding. This is used effectively to provide one to one tuition and well-chosen resources to ensure pupils make good progress.
- High quality advice and careers guidance contributes strongly to pupils making thoughtful choices about the next steps of their learning or their future employment.
- The school promotes equal opportunities effectively, for example by ensuring pupils' progress is carefully checked and steps are taken if a pupil is slipping behind. It tackles any signs of discrimination vigorously.
- The school's arrangements to keep pupils safe meet statutory requirements.
- The local authority provides good support and challenge to the school, including contributing to the headteacher's appraisal.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know the strengths of the school and where it can improve further. In the past, governors have not always been systematic and rigorous enough in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but they are increasingly guiding the school's direction effectively. They manage finances conscientiously. Governors have a clear overview of the achievement of pupils and the quality of teaching. They are aware of how funding is spent and the impact that it has. Governors are involved in headteacher appraisal and have oversight of the systems for appraising other staff. They help ensure that teachers' pay awards are considered in the light of the progress pupils make. Governors are aware of the different sources of funding the school uses, including additional funding, and know the impact that it is having. They ensure that spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and that pupils are taught about British values so that they are well prepared for life after school. Governors attend suitable training and evaluate their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons and around school, including at break times, they are well behaved. The longer they are at the school, the more mature they become in their thoughtfulness towards others because staff set a good example in their courtesy and consideration.
- Where pupils' behaviour is challenging, staff deal with this well. Pupils understand the high expectations of their behaviour and generally rise to meet them.
- There have been no permanent exclusions since the previous inspection and any fixed-term exclusions are used as positive ways of enabling the pupil to return quickly to learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, helped by the encouraging atmosphere of the school. Pupils appreciate staff skills in helping them manage their behaviour. One pupil said of staff, 'They calm you down.' Another stated, 'They understand us.'
- Pupils, staff and parents consider that behaviour is good, while recognising that individual pupils can have

'off days'. There are examples of pupils making dramatic improvements in behaviour in their time at school.

- Pupils understand what bullying is and know about different types of bullying. They state that it is uncommon and mainly takes the form of name calling, for example when pupils are upset. They have confidence that staff deal with any situations such as this fairly and effectively.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils, governors, staff and parents all express confidence about pupils' safety.
- Pupils can give examples of keeping safe, for example in water, and several have increased their skills in swimming. Older pupils especially can explain the risks of aspects of the internet and the need for care and vigilance when using social networking sites. This is because the school covers this thoroughly in its programmes of study.
- Pupils act safely in school and in lessons, for example when using tools and equipment. They say that they take care to be safe and that there are reminders, as appropriate, in lessons.
- The good behaviour of pupils is reflected in the pride they take of the school building, which is litter free and very well cared for.
- Depending on their age and maturity, pupils have a developing understanding of British values, for example recognising the importance of fairness in dealing with others.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach and know their individual pupils very well. This enables teachers to plan lessons that are interesting and motivating.
- Teachers skilfully assess learning in lessons and modify planned activities if necessary. They use a good mixture of questions to check that pupils understand.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are positive and trusting. Pupils speak highly of staff.
- Staff convey high expectations of students, setting clear boundaries.
- Resources are very well chosen to enliven lessons and make them interesting. Computer technology is effectively used. For example, animated video clips were used in some lessons which captured pupils' interest.
- In the main, the skilled adults who support students' learning make a valuable contribution to improvements in pupils' progress and behaviour, working closely with teachers. This is especially the case when they are working with individual pupils and small groups.
- Staff manage behaviour well through good relationships and through consistently applying the school's agreed sanctions and rewards. They use a wide range of strategies and skills to help ensure good behaviour. Any challenging behaviour is dealt with calmly so that learning quickly resumes.
- Pupils have learning targets for different subjects and they know and understand these. This helps them to achieve well.
- Suitable homework is regularly set. Literacy and numeracy are effectively taught so that pupils are able to use these skills in other subjects and areas of study.
- Just occasionally, teachers when addressing the whole class do not fully use additional adults who support learning, for example by having them check pupils' understanding and contributions so that their support has the maximum impact on pupils' progress.
- At times, work is not matched closely enough to some pupils' levels of skill and understanding and this can slow their progress.
- Learning time is occasionally lost in lessons, for example when pupils change activities. Where this occurs, the pace of learning slows and this can hinder pupils' progress.
- Teachers' marking is up to date and encouraging, and the best marking shows pupils what they should do to improve. However, this good practice is not yet widespread and pupils are not always clear about how to improve their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils generally enter the school with standards that are below those typical for their age. This is because of their special educational needs, previous missed schooling and, for some, negative experiences of education.
- From their different starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well in each key stage, including those that are the highest attainers in the context of the school.
- In Key Stage 4, pupils pass a good range of suitable examinations including GCSEs, Entry Level certificates, and functional English and mathematics qualifications. The school does not enter pupils early for examinations, so this does not have a limiting effect on the potential of the highest attaining pupils in the school.
- Pupils in each key stage are well prepared for the next steps of their education because staff work closely together to ensure that they are consistent in their support.
- Pupils learn well in lessons because relationships are encouraging and lessons are interesting. For example, in a lesson in which pupils analysed a movie trailer, the teachers' enthusiasm and the interesting topic captured pupils' attention. As a result, they achieved well.
- Some pupils come to the school with low standards in literacy and lacking confidence to tackle reading. They are encouraged to read widely and often. Because the school works successfully to build pupils' self-esteem, pupils increasingly grow in confidence and competence in literacy.
- Different groups achieve well, including those with different types of special educational need, boys and girls and pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- Disadvantaged pupils supported through additional funding achieve as well or better than other pupils. This is because the funding helps provide one-to-one tuition, and resources such as tablet computers. The number of pupils taking tests is sometimes very small, so it is inappropriate to report on the relative attainment of disadvantaged pupils compared with other pupils.
- Year 7 pupils, supported through additional funding to develop their literacy and numeracy skills, make good progress because of extra individual support and well-chosen resources.
- The pupils who are educated at the local mainstream primary and secondary schools achieve well because their progress is tracked carefully and they receive good support.
- The school has a well-established system for tracking pupils' progress so that any at risk of falling behind are spotted early and steps taken to accelerate their learning.
- Pupils benefit from the excellent opportunities for work-related activities and appreciate the importance and practical relevance of these.

The sixth form provision is outstanding

- The leadership and development of the sixth form over the past three years have led to outstanding provision.
- Students in the sixth form achieve very well indeed because they are highly motivated by the excellent facilities and resources. They gain a wide range of qualifications very well suited to their skills and understanding.
- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and successfully encourage students to reflect on their work and to support others. For example, during a performing arts lesson in which students fully participated with commitment and confidence, a student asked another student to help her read some information to the class, courteously thanking him afterwards.
- Because the sixth form prepares students exceptionally well for the future, in the last academic year all students who left the sixth form gained employment or a place in further education.
- Behaviour is excellent because students are given numerous opportunities for independence and achievement, which they grasp with both hands. Relationships are highly positive. Students in the sixth form are proud of the provision and grow in confidence and maturity in their time there.
- The programmes students follow are exceptionally well chosen. Outstanding teaching ensures work is closely tailored to students' interests and abilities. Staff work closely together to ensure maximum progress, including in work-related programmes.
- Students are safe and recognise the care that is taken in lessons to ensure safety, for example when using specialist equipment.
- Leadership and management over time are highly effective in conveying a clear sense of direction for the provision and maintaining very high aspirations.

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	109392
Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	447748

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	5–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	140
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	16
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Teresa Hopper
Headteacher	Darren Ewings
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 May 2013
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