

The King's School Specialising in Mathematics and Computing

Mill Hill Lane, Pontefract, West Yorkshire, WF8 4JF

Inspection dates 9–10 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		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. Not enough students make good progress throughout the school. While the rate of progress has started to quicken, it is variable between groups.
- The gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and other groups, in particular, while narrowing, is too wide.
- The quality of teaching requires improvement. It is improving and some is at least good. However, other teaching requires improvement, which slows students' progress over time.
- Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour in lessons are variable, depending on the quality of teaching. Some students lose interest when teaching does not get their attention and motivate them.
- Students' work, particularly for the most able, is not always a good match to their needs and abilities. This slows the rate of progress they make.
- Marking is inconsistent in telling students what they need to do next to make further progress. Not all teachers check that students respond to any advice that they are given to ensure that they can do this.
- The regularity and amount of homework is variable so students do not always embed as quickly and as well as possible what they have learned.
- Attendance is in line with the national average. It has not improved quickly enough over time and the attendance rates of some groups of students, especially disadvantaged students and disabled students and those who have special educational needs, is not sufficiently regular to enable them to learn well.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's leaders have made very important improvements to how the school performs, including better teaching, raising standards and students' overall rate of progress is quickening.
- Girls make good progress throughout the school.
- Students behave well around the school, showing consideration and respect for others as they move around the site.
- Teaching assistants provide helpful guidance and support to individual students.
- Students feel safe within a caring environment.
- The governing body provides very robust challenge to the school in its determination to ensure that teaching and students' achievement continues to improve.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning in a wide range of lessons, 11 of which were observed jointly with either the headteacher or with individual members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors talked with students during lessons and at break and lunch times. They met formally with four groups of students to hear their views about the quality of education they receive at the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with senior and subject leaders, members of the governing body, the school's improvement adviser and the chief executive of the Pontefract Academies Trust.
- The inspectors looked at a variety of documentation including information about the standards and progress of all groups of students in the school. They checked the school's development plan, subject department plans and performance management procedures and their impact on driving improvement. They scrutinised students' work, checked records of their attendance and behaviour and reviewed policies to help keep them safe.
- The inspectors took into account the 64 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and the 108 responses given in the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Lynne Blakelock, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne McAvan	Additional Inspector
Philip Hyman	Additional Inspector
Mary Lanovy-Taylor	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-size secondary school.
- The King's School converted to become an academy in April 2013. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted in November 2010, it was judged to be good.
- Most students are of White British heritage. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is increasing but remains well-below average.
- The proportion of students known to be disadvantaged and, therefore, supported through the pupil premium is below average. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average but rising.
- Thirteen students spend part or all of the week at Wakefield College studying either hair and beauty, motor vehicle technology or construction, or attending the Firefighters' Course.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.
- The school is part of The Pontefract Academies Trust, which was set up in April 2013. It consists of two secondary schools and six primary schools.
- The King's School is the lead school for the Wakefield Regional Partnership for Initial Teacher Training.
- The headteacher, previously the co-headteacher, was appointed as permanent headteacher in January 2015. There have been many other changes to staffing. The headteacher has restructured the senior leadership team to reflect the school's needs.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and supports the quick progress of all groups of students, especially disadvantaged students and the most able, by making sure that:
 - activities in lessons are a good match to students' differing needs and abilities so that they provide effective challenge
 - marking tells students what they need to do to make further progress and teachers ensure that students respond to their advice
 - homework is set regularly to embed and strengthen students' learning
 - effective teaching is shared regularly with teachers who need to strengthen their practice.
- Promote students' consistently positive attitudes to school and learning, and their good progress, by ensuring that:
 - teaching interests and motivates students to want to learn
 - the attendance of students, particularly those who are disadvantaged and those with special educational needs, rises quickly
 - students understand fully the link between attendance and rates of progress and the importance that employers place on very regular attendance
 - students are encouraged to take responsibility for their attendance.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's major focus since the school became an academy has been to ensure that it has very good systems in place to best meet the more diverse needs of the students and to enable them to achieve well. Through taking difficult decisions about staffing in order to enable a better quality of teaching, and by restructuring senior leaders' responsibilities, improvements are evident in teaching and achievement.
- Students' attendance and behavioural issues are being addressed and, while there is some way to go, leaders are proving to have a good capacity to make further improvements. The much more effective systems to check the school's work have ensured that there is a much greater depth to leaders' knowledge of their areas and of the pace of improvements being made. Particularly noteworthy are the more rapid rates of students' progress in Year 11, which are evidenced by the school's data, external checks and other inspection evidence.
- The leadership and management of teaching are good because the checks made on teaching are thorough and ensure prompt support for those teachers who need to strengthen their practice. Hence, the amount of good teaching has increased, despite the overall quality still requiring improvement.
- Senior leaders and middle leaders are also responding to new roles and greater accountability, including effective action in reducing permanent exclusions. Students are responding well to the strategies employed and there has been a drop in exclusions. Attendance is proving harder to improve but the raft of incentives for students that have been introduced has already initiated a rise in attendance.
- The significant factor in the improvements being made is that leaders at all levels check very regularly the impact of what they are doing and quickly adapt their actions to ensure maximum effectiveness for the students.
- The school works well as part of the Trust, providing support for other schools, such as training primary school teachers in the Trust schools to be able to teach Level 6 mathematics and in preparing pupils for transition to secondary school. It has benefited from its role as lead school for initial teacher training, including through the good appointments it has made to strengthen teaching at The King's School.
- Staff's performance targets are chosen carefully to reflect the school's needs in improving teaching. They are measurable and achievable and are resulting in more skilful teaching. Teaching assistants value their performance targets, which are building-up effectively their knowledge and practice in supporting the learning of individual students.
- Most staff feel that they are well supported by the training they are offered, not just to strengthen their teaching but also their leadership roles and their career ambitions.
- Subject leaders and year leaders of achievement are strengthening their skills in managing their areas efficiently and effectively. This has been facilitated by a well-planned development programme. The headteacher is now extending their training to ensure that they evaluate comprehensively the quality of work in students' books.
- All leaders have a major focus on disadvantaged students' achievement and attendance. The spending of pupil premium funding has been reviewed to check that it supports disadvantaged students more accurately, according to their needs and circumstances. There is a greater focus on academic support, through, for example, help to consolidate students' reading, writing and number skills. It also ensures greater opportunities for students to participate in extra-curricular activities that will encourage them to attend school more regularly.
- Gaps in attainment between disadvantaged students and other groups of students are now narrowing but remain wider than leaders would wish. The school has taken the very helpful advice of its improvement adviser to rethink how these students can best be helped, starting with leaders' good individual knowledge of these students' needs. All staff understand their responsibility in accelerating the learning of disadvantaged students.
- The school has acted to try to bring boys' achievement more in line with that of the girls, who learn well. This is work in progress, with impact not fully evident.
- Some disadvantaged students find it harder to make progress because of their poor attendance. The behaviour leader is focusing particularly on this group of students. She also supports disabled students and those with special educational needs whose attendance records are poor overall.
- The leader of special educational needs provision, plans carefully for the teaching and academic and pastoral guidance of individual students. The assistant leader of special educational needs oversees literacy provision well, particularly reading and in Year 7. However, attendance and exclusion issues do slow down the progress of some students because they miss out on important learning and the leader is very aware of the need for greater scrutiny and involvement in attendance and exclusion issues in driving

improvements in students' progress.

- The school provides a balanced curriculum for students throughout the school, including languages and creative subjects. It provides appropriately for their needs and interests, such as the hair and beauty course off-site. Students have timely careers guidance and an on-going programme of personal development, incorporating appropriate promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding to prepare them for school or college or training after Year 11. The school ensures that students understand what British values stand for, including their roles and responsibilities in society. Students speak highly of the wide range of extra-curricular activities which they enjoy greatly.
- The school's careful construction of the curriculum shows its commitment to equal opportunities for students. It does not tolerate discrimination. Leaders work successfully to foster good relations and sustain a harmonious community. This is evident in the chances for some students to learn off-site. Leaders make regular checks on these students' progress, behaviour and attendance to ensure their well-being and progress.
- All staff understand the importance of keeping the students safe. Leaders and managers make sure that safeguarding procedures meet the statutory requirements. Inspection evidence shows that there is good practice in keeping vulnerable students safe.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governors are holding the school to account increasingly effectively. They are able to do this because they have a comprehensive knowledge of what is happening in the school and its impact on students' achievement. Most importantly, they constantly probe results and check that improvements are happening across the school, including in attendance.
- The governing body has a wide range of skills to ensure that governors can oversee all the school's work. The budget balances, and spending has to be justified and appropriate planning is in place for the next few years to ensure that finances remain sound.
- The governors go on regular training courses to ensure they are up to date with requirements. This includes training for safeguarding and on using and interpreting data on the school's performance.
- The governing body knows the school's strengths and its needs through its very rigorous probing of students' achievement and any anomalies. Minutes of the governing body meetings suggest increased depth of questioning following 2014 results, which continues, and which includes detailed questioning of leaders and how they intend to improve achievement in areas that performed less well than expected.
- The governors check regularly the school's progress towards its goals, including the progress of disadvantaged students, which they have ensured is a key area for improvement. The governors know the gap between their achievement and that of others in the school needs to narrow more and quickly.
- There is a supportive element to governors' work in the high standards they demand. They check that support is provided for staff who need help to achieve their performance targets. They do not agree to pay rises unless targets have been met fully.
- The governors know that the school is improving. They also know that there are variations in the quality of teaching and in students' achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. When teaching does not interest students or work is too easy or too hard, a minority of students stop concentrating, fidget and talk to others. All students try very hard to learn as well as they can when teaching interests them.
- Behaviour is good around the school. Students behave sensibly and are orderly as they move from lesson to lesson, go to lunch and move to recreational areas. They mostly get on well with each other and are polite and welcoming to visitors in what is a friendly school.
- The behaviour of students who learn-off site shows improvement for most and is good for some because they like their courses and try harder to succeed in them.
- Students value the wide range of opportunities they have to develop their personal and social skills and to make decisions and take responsibility. They include helping out in subject areas, such as supporting younger readers through their roles as student leaders and members of the anti-bullying committee.
- Personal development lessons enable students to learn about how democracy works in school and in the country. They see the sense in this in maintaining a fair society.
- The school has higher expectations of students' behaviour than in the past. This led to a brief rise in the

number of fixed-term exclusions, mainly of boys. The behaviour and safety leader is doing sterling work in modifying individual students' behaviour and the latest figures show that the rate of fixed-term exclusions of all students has fallen. There are fewer permanent exclusions because of the effective initiatives in school.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement. Attendance is average. While some students' attendance is excellent and at least average for many, the attendance of students overall needs to be higher to enable them all to learn at least well.
- Persistent absenteeism, while falling, is well above the national average because the attendance of some disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs, is erratic.
- Most students feel safe in school because the site is safe and they say there is always someone on the staff from whom they can get help and advice.
- Students say there is some bullying, which is mainly dealt with quickly and is more name-calling than bullying. However, this upsets some students and reflects some lack of respect for each other.
- They know that prejudice is wrong. They can explain several different types of bullying including racism and homophobia. The school is considering how best to inform all students of the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, relative to their age. Older students know about these issues. Students who learn off-site feel safe and secure because the school carries out the same checks as they do at the school to make sure of this. Since learning off-site, the attendance of the majority of students has improved.
- The school makes sure that students know the range of potential risks to their safety, particularly cyber-bullying, through the personal development programme.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable. It is improving but is not consistently good and does not result in students' good progress over time, including in English and mathematics.
- The tasks teachers set are often too easy and sometimes too hard to keep students motivated and to enable them to learn as well as possible. This is more so for the most able students who, therefore, do not master more complex skills and concepts as quickly as they could. When teaching is very effective students do just that. In Year 10, students were challenged well to think, work out and justify their answers to quadratic equations. Misconceptions were challenged and explained. Students enjoyed the effort they had to make and solving problems.
- Marking does not consistently help students to make rapid progress because it does not tell them specifically what they need to do to learn well. Some marking, though, is very effective, including in science, and is an important factor in students' good progress over time in this subject. Not all teachers check that students have responded to their advice, which means that some students do not learn from their mistakes.
- Homework is provided on an irregular basis for some students and amounts vary. Although older students said they are set a lot of homework, younger students, including those in Year 9, said they would like more. Students' planners show the inconsistency of the quality and quantity of homework in embedding and broadening learning.
- Teaching is increasingly good. In art, for example, students learn well because they are guided and supported well and know exactly what they have to do to make good progress.
- In a physical education lesson, students also made rapid progress. They enjoyed the responsibility of being coaches and evaluating the strengths and areas for improvement in each other's actions.
- Teaching assistants are effective in supporting individual disabled students and those with special educational needs to secure specific literacy and numeracy skills and in building-up their confidence. Consequently, improvements in the standards they achieve are coming through, especially in the proportion achieving five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations.
- Students read regularly, such as in tutor time and in literacy support groups. Teachers often make good use of texts in subjects other than English to check students' understanding of words and to select key points.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Achievement requires improvement because not enough students make good progress throughout the school. The gap in achievement between disadvantaged students and other groups of students, although narrowing, remains too wide. The most able students do not all achieve what they should because not enough is consistently expected of them.
- Standards fell in Year 11 in 2014 to below average, including in the proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades in GCSE examinations, including in English and mathematics. This was due to variable teaching and expectations over time.
- Last year's Year 11 joined the school in Year 7 with well-below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. This led to the school's decision to enter about one-quarter of the year group for examinations more than once in order to help them to secure the best results possible. The school now allows students to enter for public examinations once, which ensures students have the full allocated time to learn as well as they can.
- Students' progress in English and modern foreign languages has been well below average for the last two years. In science, a greater proportion of students have made expected and better than expected progress than found nationally.
- The school's much higher expectations of staff, the greater proportion of good teaching and careful checks on students' progress, have led to improving achievement in most areas, including in English, where progress is now average. Evidence from students' work over time shows that overall students make expected progress through the school and the proportion making better than expected progress is rising.
- Currently, students in Year 11 are working at above expected standards in drama and music, subjects in which their attainment dipped last year. Standards in, for example, science, art and geography continue to be above average, due to consistently good teaching that interests and enthuses students.
- Girls achieve well throughout the school, showing overall a great commitment to all aspects of their learning.
- In Key Stage 3, students' progress varies between expected and good. It is patchy, reflecting the remaining inconsistencies in some teaching.
- Disadvantaged students achieve less well than other groups of students. In Year 11 in 2014, there was a gap of approximately one and a half grades in standards in English and mathematics, both within other students in the school and nationally. Disadvantaged students make slower progress than non-disadvantaged students nationally.
- This year, the school's data shows that the gap between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged students and that of non-disadvantaged students has narrowed, at both key stages. However, there is more ground to make up, with improving the attendance of some disadvantaged students a key factor.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar progress to other groups over time. There has been a rise in in the proportion of these students gaining five A* to G grades in GCSE examinations.
- The most able students do not always achieve their potential. A below average proportion of students reach the higher levels of which they are capable. The exceptions are in subjects such as art, where the proportion is well-above average.
- Those students who do not reach the expected standards in English and mathematics by the end of primary school receive specific help to improve their reading, writing and number skills, including a reading club. This year, students in Year 7 who were below Level 4 on entry to the school achieved the expected levels in English; half reached the expected levels in mathematics. However, almost all of these students who do not reach the expected standard make good progress towards achieving it. This is due to the support they receive through Year 7 funding which helps them to catch up to where they should be.
- Students who learn off-site have variable success. Some achieve very well and complete their courses. A very few students do not complete their courses because of unsatisfactory behaviour or attendance.
- Most students go on to sixth form or further education, or go into training.

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	139500
Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	461875

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	1,038
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kath Evans
Headteacher	Barbara Tibbetts
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01977 601701
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