

Kingsdown School

Hyde Road, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon SN2 7SH

Inspection dates

23–24 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels have not improved the quality of teaching enough since the previous inspection. Senior leaders, governors and subject leaders have been slow to implement plans to improve. As a result, gains have been too slow to materialise.
- Pupils' achievement remains too variable across different subjects. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is not improving. Pupils' achievement in modern foreign languages is not good enough and has declined over time.
- The gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and their peers remains too wide, most notably in mathematics and Year 8.
- Leaders have not ensured that staff are applying the school's marking policy consistently. In humanities subjects and some English groups, pupils are making good progress as a result of the feedback they receive, but in other subjects this is less effective.
- Leaders have not ensured that teachers' expectations of pupils are set high enough. This is particularly the case for the most-able pupils, who are not achieving their full potential in enough subjects.
- Teachers of subjects other than English do not do enough to improve pupils' literacy skills. Pupils continue to make the same spelling and grammatical errors in different subjects because these are not identified and addressed. Materials provided for pupils to read in other subjects are not closely matched to pupils' level of reading ability and skill.
- In some subjects, work set is not engaging and well matched to pupils' different abilities. As a result, occasionally, pupils' attitudes to learning falter and, in a very small number of cases, this disrupts other pupils' work.

The school has the following strengths

- The work the school does to support pupils' personal development and well-being is good.
- Teaching and achievement in English are improving; in particular, the focus on reading in Years 7, 8 and 9 is improving pupils' confidence and fluency.
- Most pupils achieve well in the humanities subjects and science.
- Pupils and with special educational needs or disability, including the pupils based in the specialist provision, the ASC centre, achieve well.
- A wide range of clubs and visits extends pupils' learning. These are well attended and highly valued by pupils and parents.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement for all groups of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils and the most-able pupils, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - have the highest expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - provide precise feedback, in line with the school's policy, so that pupils know how to improve their work
 - insist on the highest standards of behaviour and promote positive attitudes to learning in all lessons
 - plan and deliver interesting and engaging lessons that motivate all pupils.
- Quickly and effectively improve achievement in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by developing the skills of middle leaders in accurately monitoring and evaluating the impact of teaching on pupils' progress.
- Ensure that in all subjects, teachers take responsibility for improving pupils' levels of literacy by:
 - taking account of pupils' reading abilities when planning lessons
 - improving pupils' understanding of key words and terminology in each subject
 - making sure that pupils are able to correct and improve their own work.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has ensured that all staff know what needs to be done to improve the school. Appropriate plans are in place for improvement, but the progress to implement these plans has been not been quick enough.
- There have been some improvements to the quality of teaching since the previous inspection, particularly in English. However, improvement has been too slow in mathematics and variable across other subjects.
- Whilst there are processes in place to manage teachers' performance, some weak teaching remains. The headteacher has taken effective action to tackle some of the weakest teaching, but is facing challenges to recruit teachers in certain subjects.
- Some subject leaders lack the appropriate skills to monitor pupils' progress well enough in lessons. A new leadership structure, designed to tackle this, has not had enough time to make a positive impact. Achievement remains too variable across and within different subjects. For example, a change in the leadership of mathematics is too recent to have had the impact that is needed.
- Leaders' aspirations for what pupils can achieve are not high enough. As a result, groups of pupils, particularly the most-able pupils and those who are disadvantaged, are not making the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders have introduced a new programme of staff training that is more closely aligned to school improvement priorities than in the past. However, this has not yet secured consistently good teaching.
- Leaders provide a curriculum that is broad and balanced. A wide range of subjects and courses, including vocational courses at a local college, is offered to pupils. However, leaders do not always ensure that the most-able pupils have a curriculum that challenges them sufficiently. A new curriculum introduced for Year 9 pupils aims to equip them better for the demands of GCSE courses, but school leaders do not have a clear view of whether this is working well.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of additional opportunities outside the classroom. Clubs and trips, including a regular ski-ing trip, music clubs and sports teams, are all well attended. These opportunities are highly valued by pupils and parents, although leaders have not checked whether their uptake is fair and includes all pupils.
- Leaders carefully plan opportunities for pupils to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. Teachers deliver this programme effectively, developing pupils' tolerance and understanding through lessons, tutorial sessions and specialist theme days. These are days dedicated to studying specific topics, such as preparation for the workplace. However, pupils do not have a clear understanding of the risks of radicalisation or what being a citizen in modern Britain means to them.
- School leaders work in a productive partnership with the White Horse Federation. Sharing of staff training and school-to-school review are helping to implement some improvements in teaching. The headteacher also receives support from a national leader of education; as a result, she has a sharper view and additional capacity to address some of the areas the school still needs to improve further.
- Leadership of the provision for pupils with special educational needs or disability is effective. Teaching assistants, including those in the ASC centre, are led and deployed well to support skilfully pupils in the classroom. As a result, these pupils make good progress.
- Year 7 catch-up funding (additional money given by the government to help pupils who enter the school behind other pupils in English and mathematics) is spent carefully on additional teaching programmes. These sessions are having a stronger impact in English than in mathematics, but overall, pupils are still not catching up quickly enough.
- School leaders are taking some action to improve the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. The gap between their achievement and that of their peers is beginning to close; however, it remains too wide in some subjects and in some year groups, most notably in mathematics and Year 8.
- Leaders spend a large proportion of the pupil premium funding on support delivered outside the classroom, such as one-to-one and small-group teaching. Leaders are not doing enough to ensure that this funding supports better teaching and learning in mainstream lessons.

The governance of the school

- Governance has been strengthened by the addition of a new Chair of the Governing Body and new members of the governing body. A greater breadth of skill and knowledge is improving the competence of governors to challenge and question school leaders in more depth. Governors are aware of the challenges that the school faces. Some governors, however, do not show enough knowledge about the quality of teaching across the school.
- Most governors know how additional funding is spent, but are not closely monitoring and evaluating its impact on pupils' achievement. Not all are fully aware of the impact of additional pupil premium funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school.
- Governors monitor the school's safeguarding procedures and policies well.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff at all levels are well trained. Leaders create a culture within the school where staff all show a clear awareness of their responsibility in keeping pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Despite some improvements in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection, too much inconsistency across the school still remains. As a result, pupils' achievement across the school is not good enough. The greatest variation in quality is in modern foreign languages and mathematics.
- Some teachers' expectations of pupils are too low. The school system of 'core, challenge and super challenge' activities offers tasks of varying difficulty, but is not applied equally well in each lesson. Sometimes activities are too easy and some pupils are failing to choose work that is hard enough.
- Teaching does not interest and motivate pupils enough, particularly some groups of boys. Consequently, pupils are not always committed to improving and amending their own work. Where expectations of pupils are higher, their motivation to improve is greater.
- Not all teachers are applying the school's marking policy. Across humanities subjects and some English groups, pupils are making good progress as a result of the precise feedback they receive, but in other subjects, this is less clear and consistent.
- A new assessment model introduced by leaders is too variable in its impact. Some pupils know how well they are doing, but this is not always the case. Too often, pupils are not secure about what it is they need to do to improve their work.
- Pupils' learning is more effective where teachers consistently use good subject knowledge and assessment information to plan engaging lessons, such as in religious education, geography and history. Most pupils make good progress in these subjects.
- Teaching for pupils with special educational needs or disability, including the pupils in the ASC centre, is effective. Well-trained and deployed teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning in lessons. As a result, the achievement of these pupils is good.
- Pupils' skills in writing and speaking are not developed consistently in all subjects. Incorrect spelling and understanding of key words are not always identified. Some pupils continue to make the same mistakes.
- A focus on improving reading in Years 7, 8 and 9 is developing confidence in and a love of reading for some pupils. However, this has not been embraced outside English lessons. Some pupils are not able to fully understand key terminology across a wide range of subjects. Plans to improve this aspect of whole-school literacy are taking too long to make a difference.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They say they feel safe at school and show a clear awareness of the dangers of the internet and how to keep themselves safe online.
- Pupils are well informed about different types of bullying. Incidents of bullying at the school are rare and when they do happen, pupils know whom to go to, and staff deal with their concerns effectively.

- Most pupils value their education and attend school regularly. Pupils like the opportunities the school provides for them to take on roles of responsibility, such as becoming a prefect. For a small number of pupils, attendance is much lower than the national average. Leaders are working hard to improve this; the attendance of these pupils is rising slowly.
- Most pupils say that they feel well informed to make decisions about their next steps after leaving school. A large majority of pupils go on to further education. Pupils in Year 11 spoke positively about a recent day for work preparation. The day included 'business dress' and 'mock interviews' with employers. Pupils value highly these experiences and say how this really opened their eyes to the reality of a future interview.
- A broad range of lessons and assemblies is effectively developing pupils' social, physical and mental well-being. A notable strength of the school is its care for pupils facing particular difficulties. For example, pupils value the peaceful and caring environment of the 'haven club', where they can socialise at lunchtime.
- A full programme of clubs and activities is well attended throughout the school, such as the school's breakfast club, which helps ensure that pupils are well prepared for the day ahead.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Pupils behave well around the school and take care of the school site.
- Pupils are punctual to lessons, they wear their uniform well and most are well equipped for learning. Good punctuality ensures that lessons can get off to a prompt start; however, a small minority of teachers finish lessons too early, losing valuable learning time.
- Not all pupils show positive attitudes to learning and respect for the learning of others. Inspectors noted that where work did not fully interest the pupils, particularly boys, their learning faltered and, in a very small number of cases, this disrupted the work of other pupils.
- The number of fixed-term exclusions at the school is too high. A new policy is raising expectations of pupils' behaviour and they are much clearer about what is and is not acceptable. However, where teachers do not consistently apply the policy, pupils do not work with enthusiasm to improve their own learning.
- A small number of pupils who are educated away from the school attend and behave well.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- The proportion of pupils who left the school in 2015 with five good passes at GCSE level was lower than in 2014. Nonetheless, achievement in some subjects, including humanities and science, and for some groups of pupils, has improved since the previous inspection.
- Pupils join the school in Year 7 with standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are below average. In 2015, the progress pupils made from these low starting points in English and mathematics, while improving, was still below the national average.
- The most-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Despite some improvements in achievement for these pupils, some teachers' expectations are still too low. Consequently, not enough of these pupils are making progress in line with pupils from similar starting points nationally.
- School leaders' assessment information for current pupils shows some improving trends. However, improvements are not consistent in all subjects and for all groups of pupils.
- Most pupils achieve well across the humanities subjects as a result of high expectations and consistently good teaching. Pupils' achievement in modern foreign languages is too low and has declined for the past three years. Work from current pupils indicates that any improvements are minimal.
- Pupils with special educational needs or disability, including pupils in the ASC centre, achieve well. These pupils are well supported with their learning and they make good progress from their starting points.
- The gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school is too wide. Despite some improvements in some subjects, this is not yet consistent across the school.
- The achievement of boys is getting better and is now much closer to that of girls. There is still some work to do to ensure that this improvement is maintained across Key Stage 3.

- Reading in Years 7, 8 and 9 is improving. A programme focusing on reading within English lessons, individual one-to-one sessions and regular 'drop everything and read' sessions is improving the confidence and competence of pupils. However, this improvement is not embedded in other subjects. As a result, some pupils struggle to read and understand subject-specific words and terminology.
- Pupils who attend the local college are achieving well. This is helping to prepare them for the next stage in their education or training.
- A small number of pupils are educated at locations other than the school. These pupils achieve the expected rate of progress and, in a small number of cases, are able to successfully reintegrate into the main school.

School details

Unique reference number	137265
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10008194

This inspection 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	1,166
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Marlene Blackwell
Headteacher	Wendy Conaghan
Telephone number	01793 822284
Website	www.kingsdownschool.co.uk
Email address	enquires@kingsdownschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 July 2014

Information about this school

- Kingsdown School is larger than the average secondary school, with specialist provision on site known as 'the ASC centre' for up to 15 pupils with autism.
- There has been a restructure of the leadership in the school, with the introduction of additional middle leaders as directors of learning.
- A new Chair of the Governing Body is in post and additional governors have joined the team since the previous inspection.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support through the pupil premium funding is below the national average. This is additional government funding to support pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- A small number of pupils in Year 7 are eligible for catch-up funding. This is additional money given by the government to help pupils who enter the school behind other pupils in English and mathematics.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- The school is working with the White Horse Federation of schools to share best practice and offer peer review.
- The school is currently receiving support from a national leader of education, an external school improvement partner and an educational consultant.
- The school uses alternative providers for a very small number of pupils: Swindon College, Lyndhurst Centre, Riverside and The Hospital Service Education.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning through short visits to a variety of lessons and 41 part-lessons across a wide range of subjects and year groups. Many of the lessons were observed jointly with leaders from the academy. Inspectors also observed tutorial sessions.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, an external national leader of education, other leaders in the school, various members of staff, and five governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plan, minutes of meetings, external reviews and reports, records of leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching, assessment and tracking information for current pupils, and behaviour and attendance data.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding records, policies and procedures.
- Inspectors spoke to many pupils from all year groups about their experience at the school. During lessons they looked carefully at the quality of pupils' work, and the accuracy of the school's assessment information.
- Inspectors took into account the 14 responses from Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and the 80 responses from the staff questionnaire.

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