

Kirkby Stephen Grammar School

Christian Head, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria CA17 4HA

Inspection dates

17–18 January 2017

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Inadequate
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Inadequate
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Safeguarding is inadequate. School leaders have not put appropriate measures in place to minimise identified potential risks to pupils' safety on the school site.
- Staff have not kept adequate registers of sixth form attendance, so cannot take appropriate action to ensure students' safety.
- Pupils made slow progress in English in 2016. Although improving, the rate of progress made by boys in English and English literature is not as strong as in other subjects.
- Pupils in key stage 4 who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not making good progress.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher leads school improvement strongly. She takes robust action to address weaknesses in teaching and leadership. Most aspects of the school have improved under her leadership.
- Most pupils are making good progress across a range of subjects.
- Overall, the quality of teaching is good. Most teachers have high expectations of what pupils should achieve.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. The great majority come to school ready and willing to learn. Exclusions for poor behaviour are infrequent and the use of this sanction has decreased over time.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses is accurate.
- Governors know the school well and provide strong support and challenge to school leaders about pupils' outcomes.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
 - taking urgent steps to minimise risks to pupils' safety when they are on the school's site
 - ensuring that registers of attendance for sixth form students are kept fully up to date at all times, so that staff always know students' whereabouts
 - monitoring sixth form attendance more rigorously
 - further improving the engagement of a minority of boys in their learning.
- Improve outcomes for pupils, by:
 - refining the support offered to pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that more pupils make faster progress, especially in key stage 4
 - accelerating the progress made by boys, especially in English and English literature.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, by ensuring that leaders and governors regularly review the security of the site, and take appropriate actions in order to minimise risks to pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Leadership and management are inadequate because safeguarding is inadequate. Leaders and governors have not taken sufficient action to minimise identified potential risks to pupils' safety on the school site.
- Staff have not maintained adequate registers of attendance for sixth form students. Inspectors found that some registers had been filled in retrospectively and that senior leaders did not monitor them effectively. Leaders gave inspectors attendance figures for the sixth form which suggested that significant numbers of students had not been attending, but could not guarantee that these figures were accurate. Staff are not always able to say where students are.
- In most other respects, the school's leadership has been effective. The headteacher has led school improvement strongly. She has taken action to address teachers' and leaders' previous underperformance. She has successfully improved most aspects of the school's work and continues to address the key issues with determination. Staff who met with inspectors and those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire were warmly appreciative of the headteacher and of her senior colleagues.
- Leaders responded well to weak outcomes in 2016. A new assistant headteacher has taken charge of the management of data tracking pupils' performance and has successfully revised the school's systems. Due to greater precision in the school's data, teachers and leaders now pinpoint where pupils are underachieving and devise suitable plans to help them reach their potential. The school's data indicates that current cohorts of pupils are making better progress than was the case last year.
- Leaders have improved the overall quality of teaching, including in the sixth form. They have a good, accurate knowledge and understanding of where teaching needs to improve, and are taking firm action to support and challenge teachers where this is necessary.
- The school's performance management arrangements are rigorous. Leaders and governors ensure that teachers and leaders themselves are robustly held to account for their performance. Where teachers' performance does not meet required standards, leaders and governors withhold pay progression.
- The school has some strong heads of department who are leading their subjects effectively. They demonstrated to inspectors that they have a good grasp of pupils' achievement. Senior leaders hold middle leaders robustly to account for the performance of pupils. In turn, the subject leaders themselves are now expected to play a full role in regular and rigorous monitoring of their subjects.
- The school uses its pupil premium funding effectively to support its small numbers of disadvantaged pupils, and appropriate plans are in place to raise their achievement further. The school recently appointed an experienced member of staff to be the mentor for disadvantaged pupils; this colleague has worked in the school for several years and has an extensive knowledge of the pupils and their families.

- Leaders are also using Year 7 catch-up funding effectively to raise standards of literacy and numeracy and they can point to improved outcomes for most of the pupils who are supported through these interventions.
- The curriculum broadly meets the needs of the pupils. Leaders have recently taken action to ensure that pupils are able to reach the best possible levels in the new Progress 8 calculations, by which schools are now judged nationally. For example, the school now offers all its pupils the choice of studying three separate sciences and the outdated information technology course has been replaced by computer studies.
- The percentage of pupils taking the academic routes expected in the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) remains low compared with national averages, largely because few pupils opt for Spanish in key stage 4. The headteacher recognises this and is encouraging more pupils to study the language to GCSE level.
- Leaders try wherever possible to match the curriculum to pupils' needs, for example by offering more vocational options to those who would benefit from this approach. There is a strong emphasis on British values, and the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is a strength.
- The school offers its pupils a range of extra-curricular activities, including charity work, computer gaming, the school band and opportunities to talk face to face with fellow pupils in South Africa via internet video links. Pupils welcome and enjoy these activities.
- The great majority of parents who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire would recommend the school to other parents and most were very supportive of the school and its leadership. A minority felt that the information parents receive about their children's progress is not as helpful as it might be, but others felt that this has improved significantly of late.
- The headteacher inherited a significant budget deficit. Over time, she has worked with governors to manage and reduce this, with the result that the school is now solvent again.
- In recent years, the school joined the South Lakes Federation of secondary schools, through which staff regularly meet with their counterparts in several other local schools for the purposes of professional development. Leaders, teachers and governors say that this arrangement has been particularly beneficial for Kirkby Stephen Grammar School as it has allowed the school to develop colleagues successfully and to share good practice with other schools. The school has an isolated rural position and staff acknowledge that development was much more difficult before the school joined the federation.

Governance of the school

- Governance is ineffective overall because safeguarding is inadequate. Governors have not ensured that risks to pupils' safety on site are minimised.

- In most other respects, governance is strong. Governors are committed and experienced. Wherever vacancies occur on the governing body, they seek to appoint new governors who will bring new skills to the board. Governors take part in training, for instance in safer recruitment and in financial matters. They are held to account annually by colleagues from the South Lakes Federation and have availed themselves of opportunities for joint work with governors elsewhere in the federation. However, the governor who has oversight of special educational needs has received no training in this aspect.
- Governors mainly have a sound knowledge and understanding of the school's performance and the reasons for this. Governors knew where weak teaching had had a negative impact on results in 2016, for instance.
- Governors oversee pupil premium spending effectively. They were aware of the need to improve the performance of disadvantaged pupils following last year's GCSE results and have appointed a pupil premium governor who supports and challenges staff with this work.
- Governors provide strong challenge and support to school leaders. They hold leaders, including subject leaders, robustly to account for performance and ask challenging questions as appropriate.
- Governors have successfully supported the headteacher to reduce the school's budget deficit. They ensure that performance management arrangements are rigorous and do not grant leaders and teachers pay rises when their performance does not merit this.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.
- Leaders have not taken sufficient measures to minimise risks that they have identified on the school site.
- Staff do not keep registers for the attendance of sixth form students fully up to date and, in some cases, attendance details were entered retrospectively. Therefore, staff cannot always account for the whereabouts of students.
- In other respects, safeguarding meets requirements. Staff have been trained in child protection and know what the procedures are if they have any concerns. Referrals to outside agencies are effective. Staff have had training in the 'Prevent' duty to keep pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism. The school's central record of safeguarding checks is thorough.
- Pupils have been taught how to keep themselves safe regarding issues such as e-safety. The school has filters in place to prevent inappropriate internet usage.
- Governors are trained in safeguarding and in the safe recruitment of new staff.
- The school works effectively with parents and external agencies to safeguard pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils' progress is accelerating and the work in their books indicates that most are working to achieve challenging targets in most subjects. Teachers have high expectations for their pupils, and pupils respond to these by working well and trying hard to do their best. For example, in Year 10 mathematics, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with low prior attainment understood algebraic factorisation because the teacher combined high aspirations with clear explanation and effective support for individuals. Pupils persevered, enjoyed their work and deepened their understanding.
- The high levels of challenge seen in mathematics are typical in other subjects. Year 11 pupils did challenging work in science on the mass of different gases, using a variety of methods to work these out. In a Year 7 history class, the teacher's extended, insistent questioning developed pupils' understanding and knowledge of the Great Plague very effectively. Most teaching skilfully challenges the most able pupils.
- Pupils' literacy skills are developed well across the curriculum. Pupils, including those of low ability, are often given the opportunity to produce extended writing. They respond well to sessions in which they are required to read independently for a sustained time. The teaching of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective, and they receive good support from teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders recognise that pupils who have special educational needs in key stage 4 require further support to compensate for gaps in their understanding.
- Teachers know their pupils well and often intervene effectively when pupils need more help. As one teacher commented, 'This school is about individuals. No one is forgotten or overlooked.'
- Teachers largely manage pupils' behaviour well. Pupils work hard and show positive attitudes to learning, although a small number of pupils told inspectors that a few of their lessons can be disrupted by poor behaviour.
- Leaders have a good knowledge and understanding of the quality of teaching, and they offer staff personalised professional development and training opportunities, often via links with the South Lakes Federation. This has led to teachers gaining confidence to adapt their work to better meet pupils' needs.
- A small amount of teaching does not lead to good progress because work is not successfully matched to the differing starting points of pupils. Sometimes tasks are too easy, while at other times the level of challenge is rather too high for some pupils and they struggle to cope.
- The teaching of English has been strengthened through support from the local federation, but is not consistently leading to good outcomes.
- Staff work hard to support pupils who have special educational needs and /or disabilities. Additional support is being provided for those key stage pupils with gaps in their progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. This is because safeguarding is inadequate.
- Pupils generally feel safe in school, and they know how to stay safe. They told inspectors that there is little bullying and that staff usually deal with it effectively when it arises. Pupils said that there is little racism or homophobic bullying. School records confirm this, but details of follow-up activity sometimes lack clarity.
- Pupils wear their uniform smartly and are courteous and respectful. Most have positive attitudes to learning and take a pride in their work.
- All pupils learn about British values and values more generally in 'Ideas, Beliefs and Values' lessons, and in upper school, all students follow a recognised course in personal development and effectiveness. The curriculum helps pupils understand how to lead healthy lifestyles.
- The school is successfully promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, for example, through its international school links with South Africa. Pupils have opportunities to take part in extra-curricular performing arts activities.
- The school offers impartial careers advice and guidance to pupils in Years 9 to 11, as well as in the sixth form. Although the most recent information about pupils' destinations when they leave Kirkby Stephen Grammar School appeared to show that lower proportions than nationally were in sustained employment, education or training, school leaders are adamant that for the past few years, every pupil leaving has found a placement somewhere. They accept that in some cases, placements have not subsequently been sustained.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The behaviour of pupils is sensible as they move around the school site, at break- and lunchtimes and between lessons. The school was calm and teachers managed behaviour unobtrusively.
- Pupils generally arrive at lessons willing and ready to learn. Almost all pupils behaved well and rise to the high expectations teachers have of their conduct.
- Teachers who responded to the Ofsted online questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about pupils' behaviour and felt that staff and school leaders manage this very well. Governors agreed with this view. A small number of pupils who spoke to inspectors or who responded to the online questionnaire had concerns about behaviour in some lessons, and these views were echoed by a minority of the parents who commented in the online questionnaire, Parent View. However, school records indicate that there are relatively few incidents of poor behaviour and that these have been decreasing over time.

- In 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities excluded temporarily from school for poor behaviour was higher than national averages. Overall numbers of exclusions are low and are decreasing over time. There has been a very small number of pupils this year who have had repeat exclusions.
- The school has worked hard to improve attendance, which is now close to the national average for secondary schools overall. Persistent absence is now slightly lower than the national average. After two years where the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils was higher than the average for other pupils, the school has now successfully improved the attendance of this group of pupils. It has had similar success in raising the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes for current pupils are much stronger than those achieved in 2016. In the current Year 11, good progress is being made by the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged. Disadvantaged pupils in Year 11 are currently making better progress in English and science than their non-disadvantaged classmates.
- Pupils in other year groups are also making good progress generally. In Years 7 to 9, there are no significant differences between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and that of their disadvantaged peers.
- Most teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress over time. Pupils told inspectors that most of the teaching they receive is effective and helps them achieve their challenging targets.
- The school sets aspirational targets for its pupils. The school moderates its assessments with other schools in the South Lakes Federation to ensure that strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning are identified accurately. The small numbers who are currently underachieving are identified early and additional intervention is put in place to help them. For instance, additional support has been put in place for a small group of boys who are underperforming in English, especially in English literature.
- Most pupils in most subjects are on track to achieve their targets in 2017. Pupils continue to perform well in mathematics and science.
- The school's new progress tracking system appears effective and accurate. Leaders say that staff know the pupils very well and that this has enabled teachers to use assessment information well to predict final outcomes accurately, as was the case in 2016.
- The school uses a range of strategies to boost the literacy and reading ability of pupils in key stage 3, including using sixth form students as 'buddy readers'. The school's use of Year 7 catch-up funding last year had a positive impact, with most pupils making good progress from their low starting points in literacy and numeracy.
- The school's own data shows that 100% of pupils went on to employment, education or training in 2015, which was a significant improvement on the figures for 2014.

- Outcomes at GCSE in 2016 were weaker in relation to the national picture than those secured by the school in 2015. The average rate of progress for all pupils from their starting points was below the national average. Boys' progress was particularly weak, as was the progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and by the small group of pupils eligible for the pupil premium.
- The school has taken action to accelerate the progress made by boys and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These strategies are beginning to have impact; nevertheless, boys in key stage 4 are not making rapid progress in English and English literature. The progress made by pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving but is stronger in key stage 3 than in key stage 4.

16 to 19 study programmes

Inadequate

- The sixth form is inadequate because safeguarding is inadequate. Staff have not kept attendance registers for sixth form students up to date. Some were not completed on time. Staff are therefore unaware of the whereabouts of their students.
- School leaders could not say with any accuracy what the actual attendance figures for the sixth form were, because they had not monitored sixth form attendance closely enough. The figure leaders gave inspectors for sixth form attendance is very low; the headteacher felt that this was not an accurate representation of reality, as most students make good progress over time.
- As with other pupils in the school, sixth form students are vulnerable because school leaders have not taken effective action to minimise risks on the school site.
- Students leaving Kirkby Stephen Grammar School are generally well prepared for life after the sixth form. Their outcomes at A level are generally strong, and destinations information shows that all students are in work, education or training, and good numbers of students go on to university. There is effective careers education, advice and guidance for students.
- The sixth form curriculum is broad and largely appropriate and the school offers a wide range of subjects. Kirkby Stephen Grammar School shares a number of courses, especially vocational options, with the nearby Appleby Heritage Centre and Appleby Grammar School.
- Outcomes for the sixth form are good and A-level results show significant strengths. All students made at least the expected rate of progress in 2016 and projections for 2017 look equally strong. Historically, results at AS level have been weaker, but are improving as a result of curriculum changes and the school's realignment of courses to suit the students' needs better.
- Teaching in the sixth form is good. Teachers use question and answer well to stretch the students. They use assessment information well to guide their planning. Stretch and challenge are evident in the teaching of a range of subjects including English literature.

- The leadership of teaching is good. Leaders provide professional development which is specific to the sixth form. Training has also been based on what the students say works for them.
- The sixth form leader knows the students well. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and honest.
- Sixth form students are supportive of the school and what it offers. Students have very positive attitudes to learning.

School details

Unique reference number	137107
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10024206

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	375
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Bennett
Headteacher	Ruth Houston
Telephone number	01768 371693
Website	www.ksgs.cumbria.sch.uk
Email address	ruth.houston@ksgs.cumbria.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	15–16 May 2013

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish on their website.
- The school is much smaller than average. There are wide fluctuations in the proportions of boys and girls in the various year groups. There are many more boys than girls in the current Year 10.

- The large majority of the school's pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is very low compared with the national figures.
- The proportion of pupils known to be disadvantaged is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than the national average.
- The school is in a rural location and many of its pupils take long bus journeys to and from school.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress across a number of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The school has no pupils in alternative provision. It does, however, send some of its post-16 students to Appleby Heritage Centre or Appleby Grammar School to study certain vocational courses.
- The school is a member of the South Lakes Federation of secondary schools.
- The school is an international school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in a range of lessons, including in the sixth form. Some lessons were visited jointly with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors visited an assembly, listened to pupils read and observed pupils' conduct at break- and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, subject leaders, class teachers, governors and the pupil premium mentor.
- Inspectors met with two groups of pupils formally and spoke with many more pupils informally. They took account of the 126 responses to the online pupil survey.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of documents. These included: the school's internal data which tracks pupils' achievement; development plans and evaluations of the school's progress; minutes of governing body meetings; school policies; safeguarding procedures and behavioural records. Inspectors also scrutinised the school's website.
- The team took account of the 68 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and of the six free-text responses received from parents. They also considered the 32 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Clive Hurren, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Dawn Farrent	Ofsted Inspector
Stephen Ruddy	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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