

The King's CofE (VA) School

First Avenue, Kidsgrove, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST7 1DP

Inspection dates

7–8 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since her appointment, the headteacher has led with drive and determination. She and her leadership team have raised expectations of staff and pupils and improved all aspects of the school.
- While pupils' progress has been weak in the past, current pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are learning well. Pupils' progress is improving towards that of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Pupils' behave very well around school and in lessons because of the clear behaviour policy. Staff enforce the policy consistently. Higher expectations have led to an increase in fixed-term exclusions.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress. They have individual study programmes that meet their needs.
- Governors are well placed to support the school as it improves because they have an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses.
- The quality of teaching has improved. Teachers have good subject knowledge that they use to plan effective lessons. However, teachers' questioning is not consistently probing enough and sometimes the tasks that teachers give to pupils are too easy.
- Pupils' attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Overall, the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school has also fallen. However, the number of disadvantaged pupils who are persistently absent is still too high.
- Sometimes, teachers do not plan for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills effectively in lessons.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' outcomes improve. Do this by:
 - making sure that teachers consistently give pupils challenging tasks that match their ability
 - developing teachers' questioning skills so that they regularly check pupils' understanding and encourage them to think more deeply
 - incorporating more opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Decrease the number of fixed-term exclusions so that pupils do not miss out on their learning.
- Reduce the persistent absence of disadvantaged pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the opening of the school in January 2015, the governing body and the headteacher and her team have created a clear vision and shown commitment to raise the school's standards and pupils' aspirations.
- The headteacher has provided strong and effective leadership since taking up the post in November 2015. She is determined to improve the school's performance and to raise expectations of what pupils at the school can achieve. She has welcomed a range of external support in her ambition to transform the school. Improvements in a number of areas, coupled with effective ongoing support and challenge from the local authority, demonstrate strong capacity for sustained improvement.
- The headteacher is well regarded by parents, staff and pupils. Survey reports show that the large majority of parents believe that the school is well led and managed. Staff recognise the improvements that have been made and are working together effectively.
- The headteacher has strengthened leadership structures. Senior leaders know what the school needs to do to improve further. They have well-considered plans in place to achieve this. Middle leadership has improved through the development of strong links with senior leaders, and training and coaching programmes.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used to provide intensive intervention programmes and to support reading. As a result, most pupils involved have now improved their literacy and numeracy skills.
- The headteacher has introduced new systems to hold teachers to account effectively. Leaders now make checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and manage the performance of teachers more tightly. Leaders set appropriately challenging targets that demonstrate their high expectations.
- Leaders place a high priority on improving teaching and, as a result, teaching has improved across the school. Teachers' training, including induction for newly appointed staff, has been effective in improving their skills. Leaders organise a range of activities to improve teaching, including weekly briefings, coaching programmes and a monthly newsletter. The school is part of a teaching school network which provides opportunities to share effective practice. Leaders typically identify what requires attention and provide teachers with regular training and support to improve teaching.
- Leaders have improved the curriculum so that it supports pupils' learning well. The school now offers a broad and balanced curriculum at key stages 3 and 4 that prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. This includes the opportunity for some pupils to study a range of vocational options. Pupils enjoy a range of stimulating extra-curricular activities that contribute well to their spiritual moral, social and cultural development.
- Following the introduction of the new policy and procedures, leaders now have a strong system for managing pupils' behaviour. Staff are using it more consistently. As a result, pupils' behaviour has improved.
- Following a review of the use of pupil premium funding, leaders implemented more

effective plans to improve disadvantaged pupils' progress. These plans are having a positive impact, though leaders accept that further adjustments are necessary to improve disadvantaged pupils' attendance.

Governance of the school

- Governors are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have a range of expertise and experience that they use to support and to challenge leaders well.
- Inspection evidence demonstrates that governors ask pertinent questions about the information that leaders provide. Governors challenge leaders about the pupils' attainment and progress, including those of disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors have active links to faculties and they visit the school regularly in order to assure themselves of the quality of education being provided. They know what is going on in school, and they ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose, including protocols and practices for record-keeping. Staff know what to do should they have any concerns.
- Leaders and governors receive regular training to ensure that checks on the suitability of staff are robust. Training of staff and governors is comprehensive. Leaders make sure that staff who join the school during the year receive appropriate training regarding safeguarding and child protection practices. Adults know about potential areas of risk for young people and the signs to look out for to identify a child at risk.
- School staff work well with external agencies and parents to support vulnerable pupils. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe online and in the real world. They know who to go to if they have a concern.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have strong relationships with pupils, and the atmosphere in classrooms is overwhelmingly positive. Pupils are keen to succeed and they respond readily to teachers' requests. As a result, pupils are now learning well and making better progress than they have done in the past.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for what they teach. They use this to plan interesting lessons that are engaging and build on pupils' prior understanding.
- The most effective teaching encourages pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding and to think for themselves. For example, in graphics, Year 11 pupils reviewed and improved their work to complete their final product design to a high standard.
- Most teachers use assessment information to plan activities which are well matched to different pupils' skills and abilities. Most pupils know their targets and can explain what

they need to do to improve. However, on occasions, some members of the class find work too easy.

- Teachers follow the school's assessment policy consistently, providing feedback to pupils on their progress and giving guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils take pride in their work and complete activities to the best of their ability. Pupils' work in books is well presented.
- A large majority of the parents who responded to the Parent View survey agreed that their children are taught well.
- Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are developed well in English and mathematics. However, work across the wider curriculum to develop these key skills is not consistent.
- The effectiveness of teachers' questioning varies between subjects and lessons. The most effective teaching includes questioning that is deep and probing. In less effective activities, teachers set questions that do not require pupils to develop their thinking and understanding. This sometimes limits pupils' progress.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils show positive attitudes to learning and respect for staff and pupils alike.
- Leaders have improved careers education, information, advice and guidance. This is now a strength. The programme enables pupils to make well-informed decisions for their future education and training. Each key stage 4 pupil has an interview with an independent careers adviser. A work experience programme involves all pupils in Year 10. A range of speakers is invited to outline different routes into employment, and further and higher education.
- Pupils are taught employability skills. Links with local businesses give pupils opportunities for mentoring, workplace visits and enterprise education. The provision of tablet computers in the canteen and in the library ensures that pupils can easily access independent sources of advice and guidance and information about local providers of post-16 education and training.
- Leaders ensure that pupils learn about the risks they may face as they grow up. Pupils are able to talk openly about risks in form time and during personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) lessons. They learn about fundamental British values, and their rights and responsibilities as citizens.
- Pupils are well cared for at the school, and the parents who responded to Ofsted's questionnaire agree. Pupils are confident that, if they have any personal or emotional concerns, they can receive support from the school.
- The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View believe that their child is safe, happy and well looked after at the school.
- Pupils feel safe at school and they have a good understanding of safety matters, including how to stay safe when working online.

- Pupils say bullying is rare and pupils are confident that, when bullying does occur, staff deal with matters swiftly and effectively. Parental feedback shows that a few parents are concerned with how effectively leaders tackle bullying. However, inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils typically behave well, and are polite and courteous. They move around the school site calmly and arrive at lessons promptly. In lessons, there are positive relationships between adults and pupils, and teachers successfully engage the vast majority of pupils in their learning.
- Almost all pupils behave well because leaders have an effective behaviour policy in place and the quality of teaching has improved. Pupils and staff say that behaviour management procedures are now used consistently across the school.
- Leaders have introduced a new behaviour monitoring system that enables them to track pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning closely. Leaders also ensure that pupils receive rewards for their achievements at every opportunity. Pupils are motivated to do well by the rewards system.
- Leaders insist on high standards of appearance, and pupils wear their uniform with pride.
- As a result of leaders' effective strategies, pupils' rates of absence have decreased, as has the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school. Leaders recognise that pupils' attendance remains a key priority because too many disadvantaged pupils are still absent from school too regularly.
- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision for part of the week. They attend regularly, behave well, are safe and achieve well.
- The proportion of fixed-term exclusions is higher than average. This is because leaders have raised their expectations of pupils' conduct across the school. This approach has led to a calm and purposeful school environment. Leaders acknowledge that they now need to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- While in 2016 and 2017, Year 11 pupils' made significantly less progress than other pupils nationally with similar starting points, pupils currently in the school are making much stronger progress. This is because teaching is stronger, pupils' attendance has improved, and their behaviour is better. In particular, pupils are responding well to the improved quality of teaching in mathematics. Pupils' progress in English is good, and broadly in line with that of other pupils nationally.
- Following a review of the use of pupil premium funding, leaders have made changes to their strategies. Disadvantaged pupils are currently making better progress than in the past.
- Overall, pupils at key stage 3 are making strong, consistent progress towards their ambitious targets. Where there are small groups of pupils whose progress is weaker,

leaders have identified these groups and are taking swift, effective action to help them to catch up.

- A greater proportion of pupils are entered for the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) combination of subjects than the national average. In 2017, the percentage of pupils gaining the EBacc exceeded the national average.
- The school promotes reading for all pupils through daily timetabled activities. This is helping to improve pupils' reading ability.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities gain additional support and resources to support their learning. Most make good progress as a result.
- Pupils say that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education or training. In 2017, all pupils who left the school went into further education, employment or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Leaders manage the very small sixth form well. They ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of students. Currently, Year 12 and Year 13 students study English and/or mathematics alongside vocational courses. This develops their skills and helps them to progress to further education or employment.
- Leaders ensure that provision is in place for students to develop employability skills and to study PSHE. Due to small numbers of students in the sixth form, a bespoke study programme is organised for each student. All students take part in work experience as part of their study programmes.
- Teaching, learning and assessment support and challenge students in developing their knowledge and skills. Those who fall behind are provided with additional support to improve. Most students achieve well from their starting points as a result. Leaders monitor students' performance closely. Current students are making good progress on their courses and all are expected to complete study programmes successfully.
- Teachers know students well and provide pastoral support to meet students' individual needs. Students value their lessons and time in the sixth form. They work hard and engage well with the range of opportunities provided.
- All students in the sixth form receive careers guidance and use this to assist them in making decisions about their next steps.
- Sixth-form attendance is good, as is retention of students from Year 12 to Year 13.

School details

Unique reference number	141700
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10037154

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
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	405
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	10
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Hopkins
Headteacher	Emily Verow
Telephone number	01782 783281
Website	www.thekings.staffs.sch.uk/
Email address	headteacher@thekings.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In January 2015, the school reopened as a voluntary aided school.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Since the school opened, Staffordshire local authority ensured that the school gained support for improvement brokered through 'Entrust', and this support continues.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above average, and an above average proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- The school uses off-site provision for a very small number of pupils who attend Stoke-

on-Trent College.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment by the end of Year 11.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a wide range of subjects in 24 lessons. Members of the senior leadership team also observed eight of these lessons.
- Inspectors talked with pupils on several occasions during lessons, and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. They met with three groups of students to find out their views about the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with subject leaders with responsibility for English, mathematics and science. They met several senior leaders, including the headteacher, often on more than one occasion.
- A meeting was held with members of the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspectors looked at a wide variety of documentation provided by school leaders. These documents included records of pupils' attendance and behaviour, information about the progress of pupils, the school's development plan, minutes of governing body meetings, the school's self-evaluation, and information about performance management. They looked at examples of pupils' work and checked their learning in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account the 29 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, 27 free-text comments from parents and 30 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Bernice Astling, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Gwendoline Onyon	Ofsted Inspector
Mark Henshaw	Ofsted Inspector

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