

King's Leadership Academy, Liverpool

Dingle Vale, Liverpool, Merseyside L8 9SJ

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The principal, alongside other senior leaders, the governors and the trust have brought about rapid improvements to the quality of education that the school provides. The school's aspirational mission, 'to develop character alongside academic qualities', permeates life at this school.
- The chief executive officer (CEO) of the Great Schools Trust and the governors of the school are determined to secure the best outcomes for pupils. They know the school exceptionally well and use their wide range of skills to challenge and support leaders very effectively.
- Teachers receive high-quality support and training. This has helped to improve the quality of teaching and learning from a low baseline. Consequently, most pupils' progress is accelerating so that they are now making consistently good progress from low starting points.
- Leaders monitor teaching and learning effectively to ensure that pupils make good progress. However, pupils' progress in humanities is less consistent than in other subjects.
- Additional funding is used effectively. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and disadvantaged pupils, are now catching up with other pupils nationally. They make good progress overall.
- The culture of safeguarding is strong. The safety of all pupils is a high priority for all staff.
- Pupils' personal development and welfare are good. A number of pupils in all year groups join the school during the academic year. Many of these pupils have arrived from different countries and have significant mental and emotional health issues. Pupils receive effective support and this helps them to grow in confidence.
- Most pupils behave well. Leaders have improved pupils' behaviour by raising expectations. Pupils benefit from strong relationships with staff.
- The curriculum is well planned and meets the needs of pupils. It provides pupils with a wide range of experiences that contribute well to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The house system motivates and enthuses pupils and develops a sense of belonging.
- Leaders and staff use assessment information to check pupils' progress and to plan for the needs of most pupils. However, at times, the most able pupils do not receive sufficiently challenging work in all subjects.
- Despite leaders' best efforts, attendance is not good enough. Too many pupils are regularly absent from school.
- The on-site 'Aspire' alternative provision centre is effective in supporting vulnerable pupils to make good progress.
- Careers education is a strong feature of this school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' achievement further by:
 - increasing pupils' overall rates of attendance and by reducing the proportion of pupils who are regularly absent from school
 - ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress in humanities
 - challenging the most able pupils more consistently across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal, senior leaders and governors have created a culture of high aspirations that is shared by all staff in an area of high deprivation and transience. Leaders, governors and staff have worked hard to make swift improvements in the school. As a result, pupils make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- The school's motto, 'Aspire', promotes the values of achievement, self-awareness, professionalism, integrity, respect and endeavour' in every pupil. Many pupils join and leave during the school year and many have recently arrived from other countries. Some pupils have experienced significant trauma in their lives. Added to this, a high proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language have weak literacy skills when they arrive at the school. Leaders and staff recognise pupils' individual circumstances and support their specific needs very successfully. They encourage them to believe in themselves and they settle in quickly.
- Leaders and governors have developed the 'King's Scholar Programme'. This provides a springboard for some Year 11 pupils to secure scholarships for sixth-form study at independent boarding schools. Five pupils have secured places this year.
- The principal and senior leadership team have an honest and accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for development. Since the previous inspection, staffing has stabilised. Staff are proud to work at the school. One teacher commented, 'You feel that you are at the hub of the community.'
- Leaders have developed a strong system to assess pupils' learning, including those without any key stage 2 attainment information. Pupils' progress is tracked very carefully and effective support packages are put in place for those at risk of underachievement. Leaders ensure the accuracy of assessments for new GCSE courses by using thorough internal moderation procedures and by working with staff in other schools and with external consultants.
- Middle leaders are now more confident in using the information that they have about pupils. They are more accountable for the achievement of pupils in their subject areas.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is strong. Leaders use rigorous performance management procedures and put in place individual coaching programmes when they have concerns about underperformance in subjects.
- Teachers and middle leaders value the opportunities that the school offers to develop their skills through training courses on Wednesday and Friday afternoons every week. As a result of effective training, the quality of teaching has improved and pupils' progress is now consistently good across most subjects and year groups.
- Following a pupil premium review, the pupil premium funding is now being spent effectively to reduce the barriers to learning for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders monitor and evaluate disadvantaged pupils' progress well. As a result, the difference between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of other pupils nationally is reducing.
- Leaders use additional funding well to support pupils who join the school in Year 7 with literacy and numeracy levels below age-related expectations. As a result, pupils who

started school behind their peers in literacy and numeracy are catching up.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Leaders have made changes to the curriculum to ensure that it meets pupils' needs. For example, leaders have created an alternative curriculum group for a small group of pupils who have particularly weak literacy skills. This is helping them to become ready for mainstream education and GCSEs. In key stage 4, pupils now have the opportunity to study a range of subjects, including a modern foreign language, humanities and vocational subjects.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Pupils learn about British values, including tolerance, respect for differences and the rule of law. They do this in assemblies and form time, as well as through the 'Aspire' personal, social, health and education programme. Pupils learn about other cultures and beliefs, for example through visits to a local church and mosque during culture week.
- Pupils benefit from a range of extra-curricular activities which help them to develop their health and well-being, such as sports, outdoor activities and the Combined Cadet Force. Pupils are also involved in charity work and have the opportunity to complete the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. They also participate in a variety of trips, including visits to theatres, sixth-form colleges, universities and careers events.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is good. Identification of need is thorough. Additional funding has been used effectively to provide effective support for this group of pupils. Therapy sessions help pupils to release energy and to ensure that they can settle and focus on learning. The achievement of this group of pupils is now improving quickly.
- Leaders and governors have recently set up the Aspire Centre, which is an alternative provision unit on the school's site. Pupils have the opportunity to study vocational courses alongside GCSEs in English, mathematics and science.
- The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, were positive about the school and would recommend the school to other parents.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed to the school. One commented, 'We want to raise pupils' aspirations and outcomes. We are determined to improve pupils' social mobility.' Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas for further improvement.
- Governors visit the school regularly to find out for themselves about the quality of teaching and learning. They receive presentations by staff on key areas such as attendance and the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Governors know how additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has been spent and the positive impact it has had on pupils' achievement. Minutes of meetings of the governing body confirm that governors ask searching questions.
- Governors support leaders very effectively and challenge them very well. This has led to the greater accountability of leaders and has improved pupils' progress across most subjects.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have created a strong culture of vigilance in the school. Records are detailed and of a high quality. Governors regularly check the single central record to ensure that it meets requirements. Recruitment checks on staff's suitability to work with pupils are detailed and rigorous.
- All staff and governors have completed training in safeguarding. Staff are aware of the signs of abuse. They know what to do if they have any concern about a pupil's welfare or safety. Staff support pupils in avoiding local dangers such as gangs. Referrals are made effectively and in a timely manner. Leaders work very well with a range of external agencies to support vulnerable pupils.
- Leaders and governors take their responsibilities for the safeguarding of pupils very seriously. For example, they have acted with the necessary urgency to ensure that the school buildings keep pupils safe and protect them from harm.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Relationships between pupils and teachers are positive. Teachers have an in-depth knowledge of their subjects. They use well-targeted questioning to probe and deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. These techniques enable pupils to make good progress.
- Teaching, learning and assessment have improved significantly across most subjects because of regular observations of teaching in lessons and training for teachers and teaching assistants. Leaders acknowledge that pupils need to make faster progress in humanities to overcome weaker teaching in the past.
- Most teachers use assessment information and their subject knowledge effectively to plan work which interests and enthuses pupils. However, it is not always sufficiently demanding for the most able pupils across all subjects. At times, work lacks challenge and the most able pupils do not make enough progress.
- Teachers promote reading for pupils of all abilities. Pupils are given opportunities to read during form time and in the library. Pupils who are new to the school, who have reading skills that are below the national average, receive effective additional support to help them to catch up.
- Teaching assistants ensure that pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities receive effective support in class. Consequently, this group of pupils make good progress.
- Teachers follow the school's marking and assessment policy consistently.
- Homework is set regularly across most subjects and is used effectively to consolidate learning.
- Teachers ensure that most pupils behave well in lessons. They get on well with each other, regardless of their ethnicity, background or ability.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils wear their uniforms smartly. Many pupils are confident and show respect to others. Pupils take pride in their work, and their books are neat and well presented.
- Pupils feel safe. They have been taught how to keep themselves safe online. Pupils told inspectors that bullying is rare and they know to whom they can turn if they have concerns. Pupils say that staff deal promptly with any concerns.
- There is a comprehensive programme of assemblies and lessons where pupils are encouraged to develop their understanding of other faiths and be aware of sensitive issues such as radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and domestic violence.
- Pupils learn about other faiths and cultures, including equality and diversity, through the personal, social, health and education programme. As a result, pupils accept differences readily and respect each other.
- Pupils enjoy taking on leadership responsibilities, such as being members of the school parliament, house captains or sports leaders. One pupil has been appointed as 'Young Mayor of Liverpool'.
- Leaders ensure that pupils receive high-quality impartial careers advice and guidance that help them to make appropriate aspirational choices for their next steps in education, employment or training. Some pupils receive mentoring at local universities. This helps them to develop their confidence and raise their aspirations.
- Leaders ensure that the pupils in alternative provision are well supported and safe. The Aspire Centre has helped pupils to improve their attendance and behaviour. Staff know pupils well. Pupils make good progress.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Leaders are doing all that they can to improve attendance. Despite this, too many pupils still do not attend school as regularly as they should. There are good reasons behind some of the absences. For example, some pupils are refugees and suffer significant mental health issues and many of these pupils have joined the school during the year. In addition, many pupils who speak English as an additional language take extended absences. Leaders, together with the attendance officer and education welfare officer, work closely with families and monitor pupils' attendance closely. Staff follow up absences through attendance meetings with parents and referrals to the local authority and external agencies. Work with families has had a positive impact for some pupils. However, the rates of absence for pupils are still too high.
- Pupils and staff say that behaviour has improved substantially. Pupils say that teachers deal with any problems quickly. A typical comment from a pupil is, 'School is much better now. Lessons are more challenging and organised.'
- Breaktimes and lunchtimes in the dining room are calm and well organised. However, a very small minority of pupils need reminders from staff about regulating their

behaviour when they move around the school and in corridors.

- In the past, fixed-term exclusions were high due to leaders enforcing the behaviour policy. The number of fixed-term exclusions has now reduced considerably because there are now fewer incidents of misbehaviour.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision behave well and are safe.
- Pupils respect their school environment. There is no evidence of litter or graffiti.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils join the school with levels of attainment that are significantly lower than the national average and many have gaps in their learning due to arriving during the school year. Pupils' progress is now consistently good as a result of stronger teaching.
- National data in 2016 showed that pupils' progress across most subjects was below the national average. This was linked to a legacy of weak teaching and changes in staffing. Too many pupils were taught by temporary teachers.
- Pupils' progress in 2017 improved to broadly average and this has continued to rise and is now good. National data in 2017 showed strong progress in modern foreign languages. Middle-ability pupils made strong progress in science and a range of other subjects. Middle-ability pupils' attainment was in line with the national average in English and mathematics.
- Current assessment information, observation in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work over time show that pupils in most year groups make good progress across a range of subjects, including English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and science. School information and inspection evidence confirm that pupils in key stage 3 achieve particularly well across most subjects.
- Historically, outcomes in humanities have been weaker than in other subjects. Leaders have recently strengthened teaching. Work in pupils' books shows that progress in humanities is improving. However, leaders recognise that this remains an area for further development.
- In 2017, the progress made by disadvantaged pupils was below that of other pupils nationally. Inspection evidence suggests that disadvantaged pupils are now catching up quickly to other pupils nationally with the same starting points.
- Progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities was below the national average in 2017 across a range of subjects. Pupils' progress is improving quickly because of strong support, both in class and in more focused interventions.
- At times, a lack of challenge for the most able pupils hampers their learning and they do not make enough progress.
- The additional funding for Year 7 pupils who need extra help in English and mathematics is used effectively so they catch up quickly.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress because they have access to a range of vocational courses such as BTEC sports studies and BTEC work studies. Leaders ensure close liaison between school staff and providers. Pupils take part in work experience which helps to develop their work-related skills.

- The school's records show that the proportion of pupils who go on to education, employment or training is now closer to the national picture. Pupils are being well prepared for the next stage of their education, training and employment.

School details

Unique reference number	137675
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	10045841

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	460
Appropriate authority	Great Schools Trust
Chair	Robina Crowe
Principal	Mark O'Hagan
Telephone number	0151 727 1387
Website	www.kingsliverpool.com
Email address	admin@kingsliverpool.com
Date of previous inspection	22–23 March 2016

Information about this school

- King's Leadership Academy transferred from the University of Chester Academies Trust to the Great Schools Trust on 1 November 2015. The current principal was appointed at the school on 1 June 2016.
- The school is much smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils joining the school at times other than the normal point in the school year is much higher than average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is much higher than the national average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium is much higher than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is above the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs

or an education, health and care plan is below the national average.

- The Great Schools Trust opened the Aspire Centre in April 2018. This is an alternative provision unit which 18 pupils currently attend. The Aspire Centre is in the final stages of becoming a free school and governors are in the early stages of planning a new building.
- At the time of the inspection, seven pupils attended alternative education provision off the school site at the following providers: Active TT Schooling Ltd, Access Education, New Heights, Riverside Learning and Education Centre and Prudentia.
- In 2017, the school met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning across all year groups and a wide range of subjects. Some of these were joint observations with school leaders. Inspectors observed pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of pupils' books in different subjects and year groups throughout the inspection to evaluate pupils' learning over time.
- Inspectors met with pupils in key stage 3 and key stage 4 formally and spoke with many more pupils informally.
- Meetings were held with the principal and senior leaders, groups of middle leaders, teachers and the CEO of the multi-academy trust. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with the chair of the governing body. Inspectors also held telephone conversations with representatives from alternative providers.
- The inspection team scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, safeguarding information, minutes of governing body meetings, information on the progress made by pupils, training arrangements for teachers and other staff, checks on the quality of teaching, the external pupil premium review, the school's self-evaluation and the school improvement plan.
- Inspectors also considered the 35 responses to the staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil questionnaire.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents, taking into account 42 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View.

Inspection team

Ahmed Marikar, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Annette Patterson	Ofsted Inspector
Alyson Middlemass	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Lomas	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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Manchester
M1 2WD

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