



Kings Grove School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111442
LEA Cheshire
Inspection number 278698
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr John Young HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Buchan Grove
School category	Community		Crewe
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Cheshire CW2 7NQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01270 661223
Number on roll	678	Fax number	01270 560789
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Gillian Lowcock
Date of previous inspection	9 October 2000	Headteacher	Mr William Evans

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	8 February 2006 - 9 February 2006	278698

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Kings Grove School is a smaller than average 11 to 16 mixed comprehensive. However, the number on roll has grown by over 71% since 2003. The majority of pupils are of white British heritage. There is a small, but diverse range of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and few who are at an early stage of acquiring English. The school serves an area which is broadly average in terms of its socio-economic profile. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Attainment on entry is below average, although the number of higher attaining pupils is increasing. The number of pupils with learning difficulties is below average, while the number of pupils with statements of special educational need is well below average. Kings Grove School has the Cheshire and National Healthy Schools Awards, Investors in People status, and Sportsmark. In addition, the school has the Investor in Careers Quality Mark. It is also part of the local Excellence in Cities cluster.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Kings Grove School is an improving school, and inspectors agree with the school's view that its overall effectiveness is satisfactory.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The school provides a satisfactory education for its pupils, and has a number of strengths. These include the quality of care, guidance and support it provides and the breadth, balance and appropriateness of its curriculum. In addition, the school works well with a number of partners to promote learners' well-being.

Although standards are below the national average, pupils make satisfactory progress overall. Nevertheless, the school is aware that progress in Key Stage 3 in 2005 was below the expected rate, particularly in English. Attendance needs improving, as does the consistency with which some improvement strategies are being implemented across the school. Similarly, the school's self-evaluation proved inaccurate in a number of areas, most notably the overall quality of teaching and learning and the personal development and well-being of pupils. Recently established systems for setting targets and tracking progress are starting to have an impact but there is still some way to go.

Despite the weaknesses outlined above, the school has taken some effective steps to promote improvement since its last inspection. These include addressing concerns about aspects of the curriculum, improving governors' involvement in the school's management and raising standards in science. Inspectors feel the school has the necessary capacity to improve further, and that it provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to raise achievement, particularly in English at Key Stage 3.
- Continue to make more effective use of data to set challenging targets for pupils, track their progress and raise expectations
- Take steps to tackle the issue of non attendance in a rigorous and strategic manner.
- Close the gap between policy and practice by addressing the inconsistency with which some improvement strategies are being implemented across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that achievement is satisfactory overall. Attainment on entry is below average, although the numbers of higher attaining pupils are increasing.

In the 2005 Key Stage 3 tests, the standards pupils reached in mathematics, science and English were significantly below the national average, both in terms of average point score and the percentage of pupils gaining Level 5 or above.

In 2005 Key Stage 4 examinations, the standards pupils attained were significantly below national averages for the percentage of pupils achieving five A* to C grades,

but broadly average for pupils obtaining five A* to G grades. The percentage of pupils gaining no passes increased on the previous year's figure. However, average points scores have improved significantly, and capped points scores also increased. Results from general certificate of secondary education (GCSE) short courses reveal a more positive picture, with standards being close to the national averages.

The progress pupils make between entering the school and leaving has improved considerably and is broadly average, as is the progress they make between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. However, the progress pupils made between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 in 2005 was below the expected rate, particularly in English. Across the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make satisfactory progress.

In recent years, the school has failed to meet its own modest targets, although more challenging targets are beginning to be set.

Scrutiny of the latest available data suggests that the school's performance is set to improve markedly in 2006. Evidence from lesson observations and analysis of pupils' work reveal that they are currently making satisfactory progress overall. The school has recently introduced a number of improvement strategies aimed at addressing the highlighted underachievement. They also work with a number of external agencies including the local authority and partner schools.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Inspectors disagree with the school's view that personal development and well-being are good, and find them satisfactory overall. The vast majority of students behave satisfactorily and show positive attitudes. However, a minority, including some older, more able boys, displays unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour. Relationships are usually good and pupils feel safe. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. However, the attendance rate is below average. Unauthorised absence is low, while authorised absence is above average.

Pupils know the difference between right and wrong and conform to the school's expectations. The 'seclusion unit' is a recent attempt to reduce the above average level of exclusions seen previously but a few pupils and parents feel a sense of injustice and are not clear about its use.

The older students value their role as prefects and peer mentors, as well as the work of the active school council. Pupils of all abilities work well together in extra curricular activities and to a high standard. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Some staff use the enhanced reward programme effectively to celebrate the achievements of pupils.

Pupils are able to access drinking water throughout the day and the school dining room is an inviting environment where pupils can enjoy a healthy menu, though some pupils consider the price of the food to be prohibitive. Pupils are encouraged to participate in a strong extra curricular programme of activities and this helps to raise their motivation and self esteem. Good progress is made in developing the personal attributes that will enable pupils to contribute to society with an effective programme

of careers education and guidance. Pupils contribute to their local community through ecological projects, fundraising activities and charity work. Through the work related learning opportunities provided and links with local colleges the pupils are developing skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school evaluates teaching and learning as good. The inspection team, whilst recognising good practice, judge the quality of teaching and learning to be satisfactory. In the best lessons, pupils benefit from well planned activities and a wide range of teaching methods that not only make lessons enjoyable but also meet pupils' diverse needs. Furthermore, when teachers have high expectations and set challenging tasks, pupils respond positively and make good progress in their learning. In less successful lessons, learning relies too heavily on direction from teachers and the use of mundane tasks that fail to engage pupils' natural curiosity. Poor behaviour management in a small number of lessons also fails to ensure that satisfactory learning takes place.

There is much good practice in teaching and strategies have recently been introduced to share this across the school. For example, a monthly learning bulletin is used to disseminate good practice and a group of teachers are observing lessons to help inform their teaching styles.

Marking of pupils' work is very good in some subjects, where it identifies strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning and gives them pointers for improvement. However, this is not consistent. Systems have recently been introduced to use data to set targets for pupils. As yet, this is not sophisticated enough to inform planning or set challenging targets that will raise pupils' and teachers' expectations. The school is, however, developing strategies to involve parents, carers and the pupils themselves in understanding the process.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school judges the curriculum to be good and the inspectors agree. The school provides a broad, balanced curriculum that meets statutory requirements. For older pupils, the curriculum has improved since the last inspection. Years 10 and 11 now have the opportunity to study a range of vocational courses either in school or off site at local colleges. Good and successful features of the provision are the work related opportunities for the least motivated learners. Both of these developments are satisfying pupils' diverse needs and interests. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in support of teaching and learning has also improved since the last inspection; for example, many subject areas use interactive whiteboards for teaching and pupils are given many more opportunities to develop and use their ICT skills in lessons. The school ensures that pupils are taught to develop healthy and

safe lifestyles through a well structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum, which is enriched by outside visitors. A good range of extra curricular activities and residential opportunities enriches the lives of some pupils and adds to their enjoyment and achievement.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school's view that care, guidance and support are good. The school's pastoral system and effective links with a number of external agencies form the backbone of the good provision that exists.

Very good arrangements are made to secure the smooth transition of pupils from feeder primary schools. Open days, the sharing of information and cross phase projects alongside the innovative use of peer mentors aid this process. Similarly, as pupils move through the key stages they receive high quality support and guidance, particularly as they prepare to transfer to either the world of work, or on to further study. Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare are effective and meet requirements.

Academic monitoring complements this pastoral care, and triggers intervention to help pupils remain on track with their work. Learning and academic mentors, working alongside teaching assistants, provide effective support for the full range of learners at the school. In addition, re-engagement strategies for disaffected pupils are sound and well conceived. Through the PSHE, physical education and citizenship programmes, good arrangements exist to raise pupils' awareness of the benefits of adopting healthier lifestyles.

Pupils feel safe at this school, and are confident that any concerns they raise will be taken seriously, including instances of bullying and racial abuse. Pupils have a voice through the school council and its concerns about bullying and personal safety resulted in the installation of CCTV cameras and an enhanced staff presence during social times. The majority of parents/carers feel their children are well cared for, that behaviour is good, and that the school seeks their views.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

School managers consider the leadership and management of the school to be satisfactory and inspection findings support this judgement. The headteacher offers clear purpose and direction and is a good role model. The wider management team provides continuity and the school's staff are encouraged to develop their professional competencies. The school's managers work effectively with a range of partners locally.

Self-evaluation is not always accurate. Though there is a developing use of self-evaluation tools at departmental level, managers do not involve staff enough in what works well across the school. Targets set for improvement have lacked challenge, but more recently more challenging targets are beginning to be set.

Governance is satisfactory. Governors show a strong commitment to the school, and their sub-committee structure has improved since the last inspection. They are diligent in their exercise of financial control and have seen the school through some difficult times. At times they have not held the school's managers to account enough.

School managers have addressed a number of the issues arising from the last inspection, but not including those about standards and attendance, although provision for ICT has been dealt with very well. The views of parents/carers and pupils are sought and acted upon.

School managers have supported staff well through uncertain times. Resources are well harnessed to provide satisfactory value for money. The school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	4	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	3	NA
The attendance of learners	4	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for contributing to the recent inspection of your school. We were able to visit lessons, and to talk to a number of you. We also read the results of surveys and questionnaires completed by you and your parents; they were very helpful to us.

Here is a summary of our main findings which I hope will be of interest to you.

- The school provides you with a satisfactory education, and the school is adequately led and managed.
- The teaching you receive is satisfactory, but staff could use a wider variety of teaching styles to stimulate your curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.
- The curriculum is good and meets your needs, and there are lots of extra curricular activities available to you.
- The school makes satisfactory arrangements to ensure your personal safety, development and well-being. You enjoy coming to school, and feel that the school listens to, and responds to your concerns.
- The vast majority of you are well behaved, and show positive attitudes to learning. However, some of you misbehave in lessons and are disrespectful to staff. A number of you also have poor attendance records, and arrive late to lessons.
- Some of you did not do as well as you should have done in the 2005 national testing Year 9, especially in English, but your progress has started to improve.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- To ensure that you have the confidence, belief and know-how to reach your potential in tests and examinations, by providing effective support and guidance, that keeps you on track.
- Improve the attendance of all pupils.
- Ensure all staff effectively and consistently use the strategies introduced to improve your school.

We urge you to do all you can to help your school continue to improve.