



The Knights Templar

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117509
LEA HERTFORDSHIRE LEA
Inspection number 280101
Inspection dates 8 February 2006 to 9 February 2006
Reporting inspector Mr. Michael Smith LI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Park Street
School category	Community		SG7 6DZ
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01462620700
Number on roll	1350	Fax number	01462620701
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr.Graham Kingsley
Date of previous inspection	8 November 1999	Headteacher	Mr. Peter Chapman

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Knights Templar is a large, oversubscribed, specialist sport and performing arts school serving the town of Baldock and surrounding villages. It has a large sixth form to which it attracts a significant number of students from other schools. In 2003 a local school closed and students from there have been successfully integrated into The Knights Templar. The vast majority of students are from a White British background and from socially advantaged areas. The number of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average, as is the number with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Inspectors feel that The Knights Templar is an outstanding school and the school's evaluation that is good is too modest. The school successfully meets its aim to create a healthy, caring and stimulating atmosphere in which all students have maximum opportunity to develop to the fullest of their potential academically, culturally, socially and spiritually. It has developed a curriculum that motivates and inspires students to achieve above national expectations and allows them to follow a very large range of out of school classes, clubs and sports. Teaching is good or better, with many excellent features. However, in a very small number of lessons, work is not always accurately matched to the abilities of all the students. Students' personal development and welfare are outstanding. Student's attendance is high. They enjoy school, behave excellently and respond well to the excellent care and guidance they receive. The school has demonstrated a good capacity to improve. It has worked hard and effectively to respond to issues from the previous inspection. The teaching and use of information and communication technology (ICT) are now strong within the school and students have good opportunities to work independently. The school is extremely well led by the headteacher who is very well supported by his leadership team. They rigorously hold curriculum leaders to account for the quality of provision in their subjects and support them in improving the provision and raising standards. Governors support and challenge the school well and hold the headteacher to account for the quality of education. The school is making very effective use of its specialist school status to work well within the community, develop teaching and learning and to support other schools. Although the school has a deficit budget it has well developed plans to address this and it gives good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstanding because students achieve very well overall. Teaching and learning are strengths. Results generally are well above average. The care, guidance and support for students are outstanding. Students' behaviour, attitudes and contributions to the life of the school and the community are exemplary. The curriculum is good overall, with a very good range of A level courses and a few vocational courses. There is insufficient time for religious education but the school has clear plans to enhance the curriculum, including that for religious education.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make sure the work in all lessons is accurately matched to the abilities of all the students.
- Extend further the courses within the sixth form, including religious education for all students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with standards above national average and they make good progress at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Lower attaining students make even better progress than their peers. Results have now risen again, after they fell from a previous very high standard, when a neighboring school closed and a large number of students transferred to the school causing a significant change to the student achievement profile. Standards are high at Key Stage 3. Students make good progress in English and science and excellent progress in mathematics. Results for ICT were high and reflect the school's improvement in the teaching and learning of ICT since the last inspection. Standards at GCSE are high. In 2005, 70% of students gained five or more higher grades. The majority of these included mathematics and English. Progress was good. The results in mathematics, ICT, physical education and geography were particularly good. Achievement is outstanding in the sixth form. Results are well above average and represent excellent progress. Standards have improved markedly since the last inspection. Virtually all students stay for the full length of their courses and progress to university. The school sets challenging targets, including those for the specialist school trust, which it strives to meet. It met all its targets for 2005. Progress in lessons is usually good and often outstanding. Very good use is made of assessments to tell students the level at which they are working and to show them how to improve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The personal development of the students is outstanding. Students thoroughly enjoy coming to school because lessons and activities are stimulating and relevant. They have a real zest for learning and attendance rates are very high. Social awareness is impressive. Students not only get on extremely well with each other and with their teachers, but also collaborate very effectively to gain success in sports, music and theatrical productions. Behaviour is exemplary and means the school is a very pleasant and orderly place where students feel safe and learning flourishes. Students are compassionate and respond very well to opportunities to debate moral and spiritual issues. They enthusiastically raise funds for a wide range of charities and world disasters. Students are very knowledgeable about the ways of life of different cultures and countries. Of particular note is the large number of students participating in trips abroad and the very high profile of music and the arts. Students are confident in keeping themselves safe, both in and out of school. They are well aware of issues linked to drugs and sex education. In subjects, such as science and design technology, they know how to handle equipment properly and what to do in the case of an accident. Students lead healthy lifestyles through eating sensibly and taking part in an impressive range of physical activities. Student's contribution to the school and wider community is very good. Within school students willingly help others, for example, as junior leaders in P.E. and supporting students with their reading. They have also made an effective

contribution to developing facilities for the young in Baldock. The student council gives students a good voice on school matters. Students are extremely well prepared for leaving school and continuing in higher education and the world of work. Students appreciate the sixth form. They contribute very well to the ethos of the school, often on their own initiative, because their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength. Relationships are excellent.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers have a high level of expertise that is used effectively to raise students' confidence. A notable feature of the teaching is the development of excellent relationships that leads to outstanding behaviour in lessons and confident participation in discussion. Students clearly enjoy learning and are very self motivated to work independently in reaching goals. Lessons are carefully structured so that objectives are understood and activities are varied to maximise interest and pace. Students with additional learning needs are supported well. Teaching assistants, attached to departments, provide enhanced support with appropriate expertise and subject specific skills. Students praise the commitment of teachers in helping them outside normal lesson time. The use of assessment to promote learning and raise achievement is excellent. Students are very clear about their strengths and how they can improve through the effective use of target setting and detailed feedback in marked work. Good use is made of self and peer assessment to consolidate learning. Through monitoring and sharing good practice the school ensures all teachers set high expectations within lessons. However, in a very small number of lessons, work is not always accurately matched to the different abilities of all the groups of students. The sixth form teachers' excellent subject knowledge and use of assessment enable students to make the most of their first rate study skills. They question assumptions and work very well both independently and in groups to reach high standards overall.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

Overall, the curriculum is outstanding. It is constantly being reviewed and evaluated and recent changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum ensure a very well designed and flexible approach, including very good provision for students to pursue work related courses in collaboration with a local college. In the sixth form, students follow a rich variety of A level courses and the school is extending the scope of vocational courses and increasing the time for religious education, which is insufficient at present. The specialist school status is leading to further courses being available, for example in music technology and media as well as enhancing the use of technology across the school. Gifted and talented students are identified and extension work to meet their

needs is being developed. The school provides outstanding opportunities for extended work outside normal hours, for example, to convert to a full, rather than short GCSE ICT course and for increased time to complete project work or receive additional help. An excellent range of after school activities is provided and participation is very high, including that of a very large number of students who follow the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. An exceptionally diverse programme is prepared for all year groups, including some activities for single sex groups. The curriculum is enriched through extensive use of external resources and the community. An extensive variety of visits are carefully integrated into the schemes of work. Preparation for the world of work is excellent. Events such as engineering days, enterprise days and collaboration with local employers contribute well to students' education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The support and guidance for students is outstanding. Parents are justified in their very strong tribute to the school's care for their children. The family atmosphere means that all students know who to turn to if they have concerns and are confident that their problems are sorted out properly. First aid and medical procedures are very well organised. Vulnerable students are looked after very effectively and do just as well as their peers. The school liaises closely with outside agencies, such as the police and Connexions service, to gain the correct advice for individual students and students see this support as integral part of the school's provision. Students achieve well with their work because teachers make it clear to them what they need to do to improve their learning. Within departments there is very accurate tracking of students' achievement. Should any student not be doing as well as expected, the staff are quick to find ways to help them improve. Students with learning difficulties are given good support to achieve as well as their peers. Teaching assistants are building up expertise within their subject departments and so can give good guidance to students. Those with particular talents are identified and given very good opportunities to develop their interests, particularly in the areas of sport, music, and the performing arts.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding because the school is very well led by an effective headteacher who is very well supported by the senior leadership team. The leadership team has an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. It has formulated a comprehensive plan on how to improve which is an integral part of the plan for specialist school status. The governing body holds the school to account very well and provides excellent support and challenge to the headteacher. The school has a very effective departmental review system, which includes gaining the views of students, which empowers subject leaders to evaluate the quality of provision and take appropriate steps to improve. This has led to improvements in the quality of teaching and standards. The school has effectively gained the views of students and parents in its self-evaluation which has informed

areas for improvement. For example changes to the Key Stage 4 curriculum and the timing of the school day. However some parents and students feel their views have not always been given sufficient consideration. When the school took on extra students from another local school which closed, it deliberately delayed applying for specialist school status until it was well placed to utilise the status. It is now using this status very well, for example, to improve student confidence and self-esteem, which is impacting across the school in helping to raise standards. In the sixth form, overall direction is outstanding and routine arrangements are very well managed. Excellent use is made of monitoring information to raise achievement. Scarce resources are used efficiently and value for money is very good with group sizes being very cost effective.

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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?	1	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

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?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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 your very positive responses and excellent behaviour when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting with you and your teachers. Your comments helped us to get a clear understanding of school life, what you enjoy and value in school. We thought that your school is an excellent school, of which you can rightly be very proud. It works well to ensure it meets its aim to create a healthy, caring and stimulating atmosphere in which all students have maximum opportunity to develop to the fullest of their potential academically, culturally, socially and spiritually. You work well with your teachers to make sure that the school is a stimulating and interesting place. Your positive comment show how much you like school and appreciate the work of the staff. We were pleased to see how you could influence what happens in school and how you take health issues very seriously, for example how many of you chose the healthy option at lunchtimes. You enjoyed some very interesting lessons and activities with some good teaching and a varied curriculum, including a very large variety of extra-curricular clubs and sports which many of you enjoy. Your school is very well led and knows its strengths and also the areas it wants to improve. The school needs to make sure that the work in lessons is always well matched to your ability. There also needs to be a wider choice of vocational subjects available to you when you join the sixth form, and the school needs to implement its plans to include religious education for all. Plans are in place to help the school achieve these aims. We wish you well for the future and hope you enjoy your time, and are successful at this very caring and supportive school.