



# Kingsdown School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 126502  
**LEA** Swindon  
**Inspection number** 282125  
**Inspection dates** 2 November 2005 to 3 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Tom Winskill HMI

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary	<b>School address</b>	Hyde Road
<b>School category</b>	Foundation		Stratton St Margaret
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 16		Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 7SH
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01793 822 284
<b>Number on roll</b>	1234	<b>Fax number</b>	01793 828 726
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Roy Field
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	15 May 2000	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Williams

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 16	<b>Inspection dates</b> 2 November 2005 - 3 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 282125
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large specialist technology school draws learners from the communities on the outskirts of Swindon, including Upper Stratton, Stratton St Margaret, Lower Stratton and South Marston. The proportion of learners requiring free school meals is low, as is the proportion with statements of special educational need. The school is the designated centre for secondary-aged children in Swindon with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). The vast majority of learners are White British, with small numbers of learners from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Kingsdown School judges itself to be good overall and inspectors agree. Learners benefit from a good quality of education which enables them to achieve above-average standards and make good progress. Learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD), make good progress because of the highly effective care, guidance and support provided. Many of the ASD learners are successfully included in the mainstream activities of the school.

The school has many strengths. The curriculum provision at Key Stage 4 is meeting the needs of the vast majority of learners. Good teaching overall helps learners to make good progress, although there are some inconsistencies both between and within subject areas. Some teaching does not enable learners to take sufficient control over their own learning and work more independently of the teacher. The school has impressive systems for monitoring performance and tackling underachievement which contribute to the good progress made by learners in many subject areas. The results of this monitoring are not always used with sufficient rigour by all leaders and managers to improve the quality of provision. Arrangements for the care, guidance and support of learners are good. This provision makes a strong contribution to learners' academic progress as well as to their personal development and well-being.

The school is well led and managed, with particular strengths in the senior leadership team. It has detailed, accurate knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses and is well placed to make further improvements. The school provides good value for money. Since its last inspection the school has made effective steps to improve, particularly in evaluating its performance and the provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Some improvements have been made to the library but more could be done.

Grade: 2

### What the school should do to improve further

- ensure all subjects provide the same quality of education as those which are currently the highest achieving
- enable learners to take greater control over their own learning by helping them to work more independently of the teachers.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 2

When learners join the school their attainment is broadly average. They make good progress and attain above-average standards at both Key Stages 3 and 4.

At the end of Key Stage 4 the percentage of learners gaining five or more A\*-C grades at GCSE has been consistently above the national average. Few learners complete Key Stage 4 with no GCSE passes and the percentage gaining five passes at A\*-G is much higher than the national average. There are variations in standards between different

subjects, for example, art, science, design and technology, geography, German, history, mathematics and RE all produce results at GCSE which are well above average. At Key Stage 3, standards in mathematics and science have consistently been well above average. Standards in English at Key Stage 3 are more variable but the 2005 national test results show significant improvement.

Science and design and technology exceed the targets set in the school's specialist technology plan for standards at GCSE and in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. Targets set for whole-school GCSE pass rates and in mathematics are narrowly missed.

Both boys and girls make good progress in both key stages. In Key Stage 3, learners make greater progress in mathematics and science than in English. The high quality provision for learners with learning difficulties and disabilities ensures that they make good progress. There are no significant differences in the progress made by learners from different ethnic groups.

Grade: 2

## **Personal development and well-being**

**Grade: 2**

The personal development and well-being of learners is good overall. Learners are happy at school; they enjoy their work and they feel safe here. Attendance is above the national average. The spiritual, social and moral development of learners is good and their appreciation of their own and other cultures is satisfactory. Behaviour in lessons and around school is good overall. Where learners are given the opportunity to work independently, they do so with confidence and maturity. The prefect system provides opportunities for learners to take on responsibilities and develop leadership skills.

Learners' appreciation and enjoyment of their school is shown, for example, through the work of the thriving school council. All learners, regardless of aptitude or ability, are encouraged to take a full part in school life. Learners make many contributions to both the school and local community, including fund raising for charity.

Projects for improving aspects of school life, as well as the lives of others, are often initiated by groups of learners. For example, a group of older learners, supported by the school, is working to help younger learners understand how to deal with any threat of bullying. The school encourages healthy choices at meal times, although these are not always taken up. The school also promotes the benefits of regular exercise, illustrated by the increasing numbers of learners who cycle to school. When the time comes to think about life and education beyond Kingsdown, the school provides good advice and guidance.

Grade: 2

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and make a strong contribution to the good progress made by learners. Significant steps have been taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning. A well-established programme of lesson observations helps senior managers to assess both strengths and areas for improvement. Annual reviews of each subject area, led by the headteacher, focus both on the standards achieved and the quality of teaching. Comprehensive information about the standards achieved by learners and targets for future progress enable teachers to match learning tasks more closely to learners' needs. Learners are also being helped to understand for themselves what they need to do to improve their grades.

In lessons observed, many features of good teaching were seen. In good and outstanding lessons, planning was of high quality and learners were clear about what they were expected to learn. In addition, teachers were confident when explaining new material and then involved learners in learning tasks well matched to their ability. Learners were made aware of what they needed to do to improve their work and reach the next grade or level. In a Key Stage 3 geography assessment, for example, learners understood what precise knowledge, skills and understanding they needed to demonstrate to gain particular national curriculum levels.

There is some variation in the quality of teaching. Marking and feedback to learners on how to improve are good in most areas, but are inconsistent in English. Learners behave well in the majority of lessons and in some, behaviour is exemplary. In a small minority of lessons observed, however, teachers did not insist on a sufficiently high standard of behaviour or fully capture the learners' interest. As a result, some learners talked too much and slowed down the rate of learning.

The school rightly sees a need to further develop learners' ability to work and learn independently. There are not enough opportunities for learners to voice and exchange opinions in lessons. In some lessons they have insufficient opportunity to work with a greater measure of independence from the teacher.

Grade 2

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The quality of the curriculum is good. Since the last inspection a wider range of courses has been developed for older learners. This means that learners of different aptitudes and abilities are now better catered for.

For example, a group of learners follow a special programme including regular work experience and one day a week in a local college. The introduction of new courses in business studies and in engineering has responded to both learners' interests and the

needs of local employers. Learners who would struggle to follow a large number of GCSEs benefit from effective alternative programmes.

Good progress has been made in improving both the number of computers and the way they are used. All learners follow a well thought out course which progressively develops their skills. As a result, learners are able to use computers very competently to support their learning in other subjects. Developments to make further significant improvements to the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) are well under way. The time allocation for drama in Key Stage 3 is below average and as a result learners are not benefiting fully from this subject.

The school has rightly identified that there is still more to be done, especially for those learners who are not strongly motivated by GCSEs but not as yet able to follow a suitable alternative. A thorough review of the curriculum for younger learners is also planned, which will take account of the views of learners and parents.

Grade: 2

## **Care, guidance and support**

**Grade: 2**

Care, guidance and support are good, with some outstanding aspects. In particular, very effective systems of assessment and outstanding pastoral provision contribute to the good progress made by learners, including those with complex special needs.

Learners are well cared for at Kingsdown. The pastoral team has a very clear understanding of their learners and they monitor progress of groups and individuals highly effectively. Student advisers work with their heads of year to create a caring ethos in the school, providing good advice at both key stages. Good behaviour is promoted and careful attention is paid to health and safety. There are good links with outside agencies which support learners at Kingsdown. Many learners enjoy an alternative curriculum that allows them to focus on their individual needs, and those who attend the ASD unit are encouraged to take as full a part as possible in mainstream school life. The ASD Unit and the provision for learners with learning difficulties are both effective and highly valued elements of the school.

Grade: 2

## **Leadership and management**

**Grade: 2**

The quality of leadership and management is good and the inspection confirms the school's own evaluation. The senior managers, under the very effective leadership of the headteacher, have responded well to most of the recommendations in the previous report. Their teamwork is impressive and they have a clear grasp of the school's strategic development. More thorough and systematic monitoring of the school's performance is now in place. Senior managers are ensuring that subject leaders have the data and skills to evaluate the progress and achievement of different groups and individual learners in their subjects. This development of the role of middle managers is

contributing to the school's drive to raise standards. There is now scope for more rigorous and consistent follow-up to monitoring in order to effect further improvements in teaching and raise standards from their current above-average levels.

The successful bid for technology status was carefully planned on the basis of the school's record in mathematics and science. The result has been an improvement in ICT across the curriculum as a whole and the expansion of technology as a whole-school subject. Learners of all abilities benefit from the facilities now available.

Resources are well used and the school provides good value for money. The area which has not been sufficiently improved since the previous inspection is the school library. This is poorly housed and furnished and not fully used as a support across the curriculum.

The school has adequate staffing levels. The contribution made by staff to improvement planning is a strength of the school. Learners and governors also share in this and the school is rightly proud of its systems for consultation and communication, which give all participants a sense of partnership. The well planned induction scheme for newly qualified teachers and the welcoming and informative booklet for supply teachers are good examples of this.

Governors carry out their duties effectively, working through a number of sub-committees. They are actively involved in the life of the school, for example, being regularly represented at school council meetings. Governors hold the school to account and make a good contribution to its improvement planning. Grade: 2



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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>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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

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

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	NA
The behaviour of learners	2	NA
The attendance of learners	2	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

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

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
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
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
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**

Kingsdown School Hyde Road Stratton St Margaret Swindon SN2 7SH

4 November 2005

Dear Learners

Following our visit to inspect your school we would like to tell you our findings. We enjoyed our time at Kingsdown, particularly visiting your lessons and discussing the school with you. You helped make us feel welcome.

You are being well educated at a school which has a lot of good qualities. There is a wide choice of subjects for older learners and improving equipment and facilities to support your learning. You are well prepared for life after Kingsdown.

Teachers help you make good progress and gain above-average results in examinations and tests in many subjects. If you did as well in all subjects as you do in those with the best results, your school could be even better. We've asked the school to make sure this happens. One way in which you can make even more progress is to work a bit more independently of your teachers and we've asked the school to help you do this.

One of the reasons you do so well is because you know what grades you can achieve and how to improve your work. The school works hard to make sure you are safe and well cared for. You behave well and most of you enjoy coming to school. Through the school council, and in other ways, you are able to influence the way the school is run. Mr Williams and his senior team run the school well. They know what needs to be improved and how to do it, as many improvements have been made since the last time the school was inspected.

I wish you all every success in future.

Yours sincerely

Tom Winskill HMI (Lead Inspector)