



The Kings Academy

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 134223
LEA
Inspection number 283104
Inspection dates 5 December 2005 to 6 December 2005
Reporting inspector Mr A Bennett

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

Type of school	Academy	School address	Stainton Way
School category	Community		Coulby Newham
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		Middlesbrough TS8 0GA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01642 577577
Number on roll	1112	Fax number	01642 590204
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr N McQuoid
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable	Headteacher	Mr C Drew

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

Description of the school

The King's Academy opened in September 2003, replacing two predecessor 11 to 16 schools, one of which had admitted pupils from a special school that closed the previous year. The majority of teaching staff transferred to the academy from the predecessor schools; there have been occasional difficulties recruiting staff in a few subject areas. The King's Academy is a specialist school for business and enterprise education. It also provides for students with hearing and visual impairment and/or moderate learning difficulties, who account for almost one in ten of the academy's roll. The academy admits students of all abilities but overall, students enter the academy with results in national tests that are below the average for all schools. In total, about a third of the students are considered to experience learning difficulties and/or disabilities of various kinds, which is a high figure. Almost a third of the students are known to be eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. Few of the students are from minority ethnic groups and few speak home languages other than English.

The King's Academy works in partnership with two other academies established by the same sponsor. The current principal has been in post only since September, although he has worked in the academy since it opened. The former principal is now chair of the board of governors of The King's Academy and chair of the board of directors that oversees the work of the three academies within the foundation. All three share a distinctive Christian ethos; however, The King's Academy admits students of any faith, or none, and operates admission criteria in common with other schools in Middlesbrough Local Authority, which does not favour any religious group.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with senior managers that, overall, The King's Academy is a good school with many strong features. Although the standards attained by students in national tests and examinations are below the national average, they make very good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. Provision for the students' personal development and well-being is generally satisfactory, although attendance remains too low and the behaviour in classrooms of a significant minority of students continues to pose a challenge to some teachers. The quality of teaching is good. There is still work to be done, however, on establishing assessment systems that help students understand the progress they have made and the targets they should aim for. There is too little evaluation of the progress students make in their work. Academy managers have an accurate view of where the best teaching is to be found and where additional support or coaching is needed. The curriculum meets well the needs and interests of most students and there are good opportunities for them to develop enterprise skills and to study vocational courses. The quality of care, guidance and support offered to students is good. The full integration of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities within mainstream classes and in the daily life of the school is impressive. Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders, in particular, articulate a clear vision for the future of the academy. Their priorities are to raise the students' self-esteem and improve their standards of attainment. Individual students undertake responsibilities conscientiously but there is no formal structure for them to influence decisions collectively in Key Stages 3 and 4. Given the significant improvements in test and examination results over the last two years, the academy provides good value for money. There is good capacity within the leadership of the academy to consolidate recent successes and to sustain further improvement.

not applicable

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

The academy judges the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form to be satisfactory and inspectors agree. Nevertheless, there are some good and improving features. The sixth form is in the very early stages of its development: it was established in September 2004. The current head of sixth form is new to the post. Students enter the sixth form with relatively low standards. Standards achieved by sixth form students in public examinations in 2005 are below average. However, the students make good progress in lessons because they have good attitudes towards learning and are taught well. Students value the support they get, particularly for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is good. The academy provides a reasonable variety of courses tailored to the students' needs and has sensible plans to broaden the range of options. Twice-daily tutorial sessions and good guidance on careers and higher education raise the students' aspirations and enable them to make informed choices. The sixth form committee is beginning to establish itself as a forum in which students can practise communication skills through presenting their ideas for improving the

academy. The head of the sixth form provides satisfactory leadership and management and benefits from links with another academy. She has identified appropriate priorities for improvement and recognises that current arrangements for monitoring the quality of provision are not rigorous enough.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve assessment procedures throughout the academy so that students understand how to improve their work and achieve targets.
- Manage more effectively the behaviour of the small number of students who disrupt lessons and hinder the learning of others.
- Continue to raise levels of attendance.
- Fulfil intentions to involve younger students collectively in making decisions about the development of the academy.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. Many of the students enter the academy having achieved below average results in their primary schools. Although the standards reached in national tests and public examinations in 2005 are below the national average, the academy exceeded most of its targets and the provisional results are considerably higher than those achieved in 2004. The proportion of students gaining five or more higher grade GCSE passes rose from 34% to 44%, which is a good improvement. Targets for 2006 reflect a continuing rise in standards.

The academy has made good progress in improving the achievement of the students. Progress in Key Stage 3 was reasonable overall in 2004 and improved in 2005, when analysis of the academy's provisional results indicates it was good. The students made reasonable progress in Key Stage 4 in 2004, although this overall picture masks considerable variations between subjects. The academy has taken effective steps to tackle weaknesses, and analysis of the provisional results for 2005 shows that progress has improved and is good overall. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The academy has rightly identified the need to improve the limited progress made by some middle ability girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The provision for students' personal development and well-being is satisfactory overall but with several good features. It is an area where the academy has made important strides since it opened. There has been a determination to establish a secure and inclusive ethos for learning. Most students readily conform to what is expected and take advantage of the many opportunities the academy offers, but there are a few who have remained disaffected.

The students' attitudes and behaviour vary considerably: they are satisfactory overall. A firm line has been taken over what conduct is acceptable. When the academy opened there was a pressing need to use exclusion as a sanction, but this has decreased markedly as students have come to recognise boundaries and consequences. Under close supervision, sometimes from prefects, the students' behaviour around the academy and at break times is good. It is usually good in lessons, particularly among the youngest students, but there are times when the need to reprimand a few students disrupts the learning, and occasionally disobedient students have to be withdrawn from class. The students' attitudes to their learning follow the same pattern: many are interested, work hard and sustain their concentration, but there are others who are passive and a small number who are reluctant to work. This picture was reflected in the views of parents and carers, and in discussions with students and staff. Nonetheless, there is much to indicate that the academy's approach is succeeding and that attitudes and behaviour have greatly improved.

The same can be said for attendance and punctuality. Overall attendance has risen year on year, from 86% two years ago to just over 90% in the current year to date. Attendance is below the national average and unauthorised absence is relatively high, but the latter figure is inflated in comparison to many schools because the academy does not sanction holidays in term time. The students value rewards for good attendance and there is a relentless approach to dealing with frequent absence.

Provision for the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The academy's Christian foundation underpins all its work. It is clearly reflected, for instance, in the formal and well-conducted assemblies, when students are asked to consider issues such as self-esteem, reinforced by prayer, awards and sharing each other's successes. However, the students are also encouraged to develop their own beliefs and principles, and those of different faiths are welcomed and respected.

Students enjoy the house system, which acts in part to encourage friendly competition, and cultural events are organised throughout the year, including a theatrical production. There are visits in the locality and farther afield, recently to Paris and Texas. The academy recognises that it has yet to organise a formal means for students other than sixth-formers to have a say in its affairs, though they can pass on their requests through prefects; taking account of the students' views was a matter of concern for some parents.

Providing a safe environment has been a high priority for the academy. The students reported that they feel secure from bullying and there have been no reported cases of racism. The less healthy options within lunches have been reduced, a balanced diet is promoted and many students join in additional sports and games. Sixth form students have taken part in community action and older local residents are invited to share in the academy's Christmas festivities. Arrangements are made for all students to experience the world of work, sixth form students take part in a residential team-building exercise and there are links with other local institutions so the students can make appropriate choices for further study at the end of Year 11.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The academy rates the quality of teaching as satisfactory overall. In the view of inspectors, however, teaching is now good. Many teachers work hard to provide an interesting, varied and briskly paced range of classroom activities. They set clear expectations for how students should behave, which helps to create a purposeful learning environment. Some teachers make notably good use of question and answer techniques to engage the students' interest and further their understanding. In some subjects, very effective use is made of group discussion and paired activities. In many lessons, teachers make effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) when presenting information and tasks. Homework is set regularly and the academy has a clear understanding of the role this has in raising standards. The contribution made by support assistants to students' progress is often good.

Although students often make good progress, this is less evident when the use of level and grade criteria is underdeveloped. The academy realises that further work has to be done on improving many teachers' use of assessment in planning, setting subject-specific targets and guiding students' progress. The development of literacy was not always supported by reference to key words identified in lesson plans.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of the curriculum is good overall. There are two notable aspects of the broad and balanced curriculum in Key Stage 3: BITE, which combines ICT, business and enterprise; and the course in philosophy, theology and ethics (PTE). Both courses add challenge and variety to the curriculum for the younger students, although staff acknowledge that further work is required to adapt PTE to the needs of less able learners. Senior leaders have clear ideas about how the academy's specialism in business and enterprise should influence the whole curriculum, but these do not consistently translate into opportunities for students to engage in problem-solving, independent learning or leadership in classrooms. The application of cross-curricular policies for improving literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory overall but inconsistent. The curriculum for 14-16 year olds is broad. It includes a growing element of vocational education, some accessed through links with external providers. The leadership and management course for more able students is innovative and appropriate.

The academy offers a growing range of extra-curricular activities. There are opportunities for students to participate in a range of sporting, cultural and artistic activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The academy is rightly proud of its inclusive approach to education. Many of the students with additional disabilities travel considerable distances each day to attend the academy. They are rewarded with high quality care, for instance in the way that adults use signing so that hearing-impaired students take part in mainstream lessons and in the trouble taken to arrange transport so that students can join in extra-curricular activities.

Due regard is paid to the students' safety in the way they are supervised and in the operation of policies such as those for risk assessment and child protection. Appropriate guidance is given concerning the dangers of smoking and drugs, and, for the older students, drinking and driving.

Each student's progress is tracked and each is set personal and academic targets. There is a well-conceived policy for marking, although teachers' responses in the students' books sometimes pay too little regard to how work might be moved to the next level. Close attention is given to the completion of homework, and booklets for each year group provide helpful summaries of examination requirements and content.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Inspectors agree that the leadership and management of the academy are good. Senior leaders, in particular, articulate a clear vision that is focused on raising the students' self-esteem and improving their standards of attainment. The fundamental aims of the academy have been communicated successfully to the staff and students, the vast majority of whom are committed to what it sets out to achieve. The increasing number of parents and carers who make the academy their first choice reflects its growing reputation within the area. While there is some variability in the quality of middle management, senior leaders have identified and tackled vigorously the weaknesses in subject areas. Support has been given both through training and by implementing systems that enable a consistent approach in areas such as development planning. Resources are used effectively. Given the significant improvements in test and examination results over the last two years, the academy provides good value for money. The academy's self evaluation is a recent, working paper. While inspectors broadly agree with the bulk of senior leaders' judgements, some analysis lacks sufficient evaluative detail. In general, procedures for monitoring and evaluation could be sharpened, both in assessing the impact of the daily work of the academy and in setting priorities in planning documents. The academy succeeds in its mission to value everyone equally: equality of opportunity, and avoiding discrimination against any groups or individuals, is evident in all aspects of its work. Minutes of the meetings of the board of governors and the board of directors indicate that searching questions are asked and debated. While an increasing number of parents attend consultation evenings,

the academy is conscious that it must continue to seek ways of developing greater awareness of its work in the community. There is good capacity within the leadership of the academy to consolidate recent successes and sustain further improvement.

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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?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

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The King's Academy

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6 December 2005

Dear Students

As you know, a group of inspectors visited The King's Academy recently. On behalf of them all, I would like to thank you for your openness and courtesy during the inspection. We were very interested in what you had to say about your work and your opportunities to take part in activities such as sport, music and drama.

We think that The King's Academy is a good school. Most of you make good progress in your lessons. Year by year, academy students are achieving better test and examination results than in the past. You are offered a wide range of interesting subjects to study and can learn to make choices that will help you in your future lives. The students we spoke to felt safe and secure in the academy and were sure that teachers do their best to give you good advice and support when you need it. We saw many examples of thoughtful, caring behaviour by students, especially towards those who have learning difficulties or disabilities.

Of course, there are a few things that could be improved. A small number of students behave badly at times and prevent others from learning. Some of you could be helped to understand better how to improve your work and achieve your target grades. Although attendance is improving, it still compares unfavourably with many other secondary schools. You can play your part in making The King's Academy even better by attending regularly, following the code of conduct and taking opportunities to get more involved in its daily work and its plans for the future. We feel sure that you will do this, because many of you told us that you are proud of the academy and value the opportunities and support it gives you.

We realise that you are very loyal to The King's Academy and that you want it to do well. We wish you and the academy every success in the future.

Andrew Bennett

Her Majesty's Inspector