



Kingsdale Secondary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 100844
Local Authority Southwark
Inspection number 285899
Inspection dates 1–2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Bill Stoneham

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Alleyn Park
School category	Foundation		Dulwich
Age range of pupils	11–16		London SE21 8SQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	02086707575
Number on roll (school)	1088	Fax number	02087667051
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs N Gibbes
		Headteacher	Mr S H Morrison
Date of previous school inspection	29 April 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	1–2 November 2006	285899

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The socio-economic context of many pupils is below average and six out ten are entitled to free school meals. There are twice as many boys in the school as girls. The pupil population is ethnically diverse. Over half of the pupils have a first language other than English, almost a third are at an early stage of learning English. There are significant minorities of looked after children and pupils from refugee or asylum seeking families. Two thirds of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. The mobility rate is very high. The school has specialist status for the performing arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Kingsdale is a good and rapidly improving specialist performing arts college with a number of outstanding features. The school is led by an inspirational headteacher and, because of the outstanding quality of leadership and management, the school has laid strong foundations for further improvement.

There is a strong commitment to continual improvement. Following many difficult years, the senior team and the governing body have set in place a range of most effective procedures to improve staff recruitment and transform pupils' academic and personal development. Standards are rising and students' progress is good.

Though standards are just below average, they have risen significantly over the last four years and pupils in all years achieve well. In Years 7, 8 and 9, English results are now improving at a good pace and the progress pupils make in mathematics is exceptionally good. No groups of pupils underperform and some groups, such as those who have a first language other than English, make particularly good progress reflecting the school's effective procedures for identifying, and helping those who might be particularly disadvantaged. GCSE results are improving. English results improved well in 2006 after a blip in 2005 and results in mathematics indicate that pupils make rapid progress. The success of specialist college status is reflected by the well above average results in music, drama and performing arts. Science results are below average and pupils achieved less well because their progress was hampered by previous staffing difficulties.

The effectiveness of middle managers is good and is improving because of rigorous self-evaluation; middle managers are accountable to the senior team and the governing body. Governors work well as critical friends and are prepared to challenge the school. They also realise that they have an outstanding senior team that understands the strengths and weaknesses that exist. Regular reviews hold departments to account and rigorous evaluation underpins the overwhelming desire to improve and exceed the challenging targets that are set.

The emphasis placed on staff training is a key strength. Though some staff are inexperienced, they are enthusiastic, committed and ambitious for the pupils. The quality of teaching is good, with a number of staff being highly competent, and even outstanding, classroom practitioners. Pupils, who have attended the school regularly since the start of Year 7, make especially good progress. The curriculum has developed well and offers an outstanding range of options. The granting of specialist status, the provision of vocational options, the introduction of a flexible programme for lower attainers and disaffected pupils and the plethora of out of lesson activities all support the pupils' academic and personal development. Most pupils enjoy school, contribute widely to school life and their prospects are enhanced by the high quality of the curriculum.

Kingsdale is an oasis of calm and hard work in a vibrant and exciting urban setting. Most pupils are proud of their school. They are appreciative of the opportunities offered; they feel safe and are keen to engage in learning. Staff provide a high level

of care and support throughout the school. Systems to check progress are robust, though there are some inconsistencies amongst staff in the use of assessment. A number of other factors contribute to the success of this school. Success is partly based on the strength of staff teams, but governors, pupils and parents play a key role too. Pupil and parental consultation are strong features. Support staff also play a most important role. The school is welcoming and the buildings are inspiring; the appearance of the school is impressive. It is smart and clean. There is virtually no graffiti or litter. The excellent site team are as committed to the success of the school as much as the headteacher, senior staff, governors, teachers, pupils and their parents.

What the school should do to improve further

* Eliminate inconsistencies in the use of assessment so that pupils know what they need to do to improve in all subjects.* Employ the effective strategies used to make improvements in English and mathematics to raise standards in science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards on entry are very low. In particular, many pupils' English literacy skills are very low often because English is not their first language. Results in tests in Year 9 are below average. At GCSE they remain below average but have improved consistently since 2002. Results on vocational courses are also well above average.

Parents praise the way that the school enables their children to make good progress. This is despite the extra challenge of providing for so many pupils who enter the school after the start of Year 7 and for the very high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. Evidence shows that the longer pupils attend the school and the more regular their attendance, the more they benefit from the good teaching; pupils achieve well. The school sets and meets challenging targets. Such has been the rapid improvement in standards in mathematics and English that the school has exceeded its targets in these areas. There is now a need to ensure that standards in science improve to a similar degree. No groups of pupils underachieve. Although some pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities do not gain a pass at GCSE, they achieve appropriate alternative qualifications which help them to progress to further education or training.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being, including the social, moral, spiritual and cultural dimensions are good; most pupils enjoy coming to school. Their self-esteem and confidence, often low on entry, especially for pupils whose first language is not English, develops very well. Pupils also welcome the diversity of cultures in the school and embrace success. 'Kingsdale gives you possibilities,' said one pupil. A particular

success is the house system, through which pupils engage enthusiastically in a variety of competitions and events including sports and the talent shows.

Attendance is improving and is now above the national average for secondary schools. Pupils enjoy their education. The staff and the security measures make them feel safe. They know that if they have a problem it will be dealt with swiftly and fairly. Their choice of food and drink reveals a positive approach to healthy lifestyles. The school is a harmonious community. Pupils have very good relationships with adults and each other. The pupils have the confidence to speak out when necessary as they know staff will listen and act whenever appropriate. Pupils' make good contributions to the wider community, for example, through charity work. The good careers and work-experience programme prepares pupils well for their future economic well-being, but some pupils are still disadvantaged by poor literacy skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Some of the lessons seen were outstanding. Many lessons have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, with clearly planned stimulating activities. There was much fun in a Year 10 lesson distinguishing 'active' and 'physical' theatre. The pupils enjoyed tantalising awkward movements involved in expressing their bodies as telephones or, grouping together to be washing machines. They succeeded in developing and controlling abstract movements from a well thought through set of experiences. Generally teachers explain the purpose of lessons clearly. As a result, pupils are clear about what they could learn.

Targets for individual pupils are set throughout the school but teachers vary in how successfully they use them. The quality of marking is inconsistent between subjects and pupils are not always being guided into what they have to do to improve their standards. Some classes have been successfully reduced in size to cater better for individual learning needs and this has resulted in improvements in English, for example. Pupils and teachers get on well together, establishing a happy climate for learning. Parents can involve themselves in their child's learning. Parents and carers can attend study skills seminars and 'drop in' surgeries reflecting growing support for pupils' learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding curriculum. Its impact on standards and progress is noteworthy. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 take advantage of an extensive range of work related vocational subjects. Many choose to continue these studies at higher levels at colleges and find a clear career route through this pathway. Pupils identified as gifted and talented are offered additional challenges by entering GCSE early; history and modern foreign languages in Year 9 and mathematics in Year 10, after which they

begin some advanced level work. Participation in different award schemes broadens the curriculum for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and has reduced the numbers who fail to gain any qualifications. Development of computing skills is very good and diverse, but less emphasis is placed on developing speaking skills. Students are enthusiastic about the extensive range of extra-curricular activities. They value the many visits and trips, like the cemeteries and trenches of World War I in Belgium and Young Leaders' Conference in Atlanta. As one youngster observed: 'You get to explore the world here!'

Pupils' enjoyment and achievement are enriched by the school's outstanding partnership with educational and other organisations. Specialist performing arts status is also a big feature of the school. It has led to wider teaching styles across subjects and enhanced creativity.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils throughout the school are well cared for and treated individually. There are good procedures for checking academic progress, but they are not applied consistently by all staff. Those identified as underachieving are appropriately challenged and offered extra support. Pupils, whose first language is not English, and those with learning difficulties and disabilities, are well-supported and achieve as well as other pupils. One parent, on their questionnaire, said: 'If I could bottle the love of teaching and of children by all of Kingsdale's staff, I would be a rich woman.'

In some subjects, pupils are regularly involved in assessing their own progress, but this good practice is inconsistent. Communication with parents is effective via the Parents' Forum as well as through reports and the pupils' journals. Pupils are guided well by the strong pastoral system and know where to get help when they need it.

Extensive steps are taken to ensure pupil safety. Detailed child protection procedures are in place and health and safety issues are well-managed.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The quality of leadership and management are outstanding. The visionary and inspirational leadership offered by the headteacher has established a most effective and united senior team and a full complement of staff. This has led to much improved provision and rapidly improving standards. Most staff are highly committed and extremely enthusiastic about the work of the school. Leaders at all levels generally understand their roles and responsibilities, though there are some minor inconsistencies in the quality of middle management. These issues have been identified by senior managers and a thoughtful and pragmatic staff training programme is helping to secure improvements. Governance is excellent. Under the leadership of a dedicated and determined chair, governors both encourage and challenge effectively. They know the

school very well. There is an overwhelming determination from governors and staff to sustain and build on the significant gains made in recent years. Governors and staff are immensely proud of their school and are passionate in their quest to raise standards further.

Very clear strategic planning is enabling the school to improve. The imaginative refurbishment and rebuilding programme is providing a dynamic, modern and exciting learning environment. Strong and consistent management has resulted in greater consistency in school routines so that classroom practice and student behaviour are both good. The school's progress as a specialist performing arts college helps to fuel the pace of improvement. This aspect of the school's work is most ably managed. The school is also very successful in recruiting, and retaining, new staff. The school is well placed to make further improvements and therefore has good capacity for improvement.

There is a strong and rigorous culture of self-evaluation that is successfully led by senior managers and involves the governing body. Self-evaluation is based on a keen awareness of the challenges that face the school and an unstinting belief that the pupils are important and that they deserve the best. A rolling programme of departmental reviews successfully contributes to remedying weaknesses and acknowledging advances. This programme helps middle managers to understand their responsibilities. Integral to the commitment to be a continually improving school are the views of parents and pupils. Such views are sought in imaginative and interesting ways.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
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	2
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
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
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	1
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and talking to you about your school. We were impressed by your enthusiasm, your politeness and your commitment. It was abundantly clear that most of you enjoy school and that you hold the school in high esteem. It was pleasing to hear so many of you comment positively on the work being done by your headteacher and his staff.

You told us that Kingsdale is a good school. We agree. You also commented most favourably on the support and encouragement you are given, on the facilities and buildings and on the range of things to do. Again, we agree. The school provides an outstanding curriculum including an extensive range of work related vocational subjects which meet your needs very well. Your teachers are keen for you to succeed. You have wonderful facilities and there are many activities for you to participate in and enjoy.

Your school is improving and examination results are rising. In part, this is because of your own efforts and the support of your parents and guardians; but it also because of the commitment and enthusiasm of your teachers. You have many very good teachers who are firmly committed to your success. I hope you will continue to work with them and support their efforts. Some of you, for example, could improve your attendance records. Those of you, who do attend regularly and are keen to learn, make at least good progress.

This report asks your teachers to address two areas to ensure that the school becomes even more successful:

* Eliminate inconsistencies in the use of assessment so that pupils know what they need to do to improve in all subjects.* Employ the effective strategies used to make improvements in English and mathematics to raise standards in science.

Your school buildings are wonderful and it was pleasing to see that most of you support the site manager and his dedicated team by not dropping litter. We all enjoyed our visit and left feeling that you are excellent ambassadors for your school. We would like to wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Bill Stoneham, Lead inspector