

Kings Heath Boys Mathematics and Computing College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103486
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	286676
Inspection date	7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Frank Knowles

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	575
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Graham
Headteacher	Selwyn Calvin
Date of previous school inspection	27 January 2003
School address	Hollybank Road Birmingham B13 0RJ
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

King's Heaths Boys' Mathematics and Computing College is a smaller-than-average school and draws its students from a wide area covering central and south Birmingham. Many of its students come from areas of severe disadvantage. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above the national average, as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The school has a rich mix of students, with an increasing number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. About 41% come from Pakistani backgrounds, 28% of students are White British, 12% are Black and the remainder come from a range of Asian or Mixed backgrounds. Over 30% of students speak English as an additional language, with the main home languages being Urdu, Arabic and Somali. About one third of these (11% of all students) are at the early stages of learning English.

The school became a Mathematics and Computing College in September 2004.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

King's Heath Boys' Mathematics and Computing College has improved significantly since its last inspection and is now a good school. It is well placed to improve further because its senior leaders have a very clear understanding of the next steps needed to move it forward and a track record of successfully implementing changes. Overall, leadership and management are good, with a very clear shared vision from the school's headteacher and senior leaders which drives development. The school's distinction between the 'needs driven', 'quality driven' and 'future driven' phases of improvement has been particularly effective in setting out priorities for change. Students' much improved behaviour and attitudes to their work, partly the result of better teaching, mean that the school is now firmly in the 'quality driven' phase of its development and can focus on improving the quality and consistency of students' learning. The move to specialist school status has also brought about improvements, particularly in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning across the curriculum and in the school's collaboration with other schools.

The school's exceptionally good arrangements for setting and reviewing challenging targets with students, and revising them upwards where they can achieve more, have changed the culture of the school into one where students come to school wanting to learn and achieve success. As a result, although teaching is only satisfactory overall, the very strong emphasis throughout the school on students reaching or exceeding their targets means that they make good progress overall and are now achieving well, although standards are well below average. This good progress is supported by a significant amount of good and outstanding teaching across many subjects.

The school has invested heavily in professional development for its staff and has brought about much greater consistency in the way lessons are organised and a calmer, more positive approach to relationships in classrooms. Despite this improvement, too much teaching does not engage students actively or develop their skills as independent learners, a point which is linked to the comments made by several parents about the small amounts of homework their children are set. The school's self-evaluation, which shows an accurate understanding of its strengths and what improvements are needed, has resulted in a clear commitment to improving learning and teaching as the first priority in the school's development plan. However, better teaching by many staff and the improved responses of students mean that the school's approaches to professional development used in the 'needs driven' stage are no longer appropriate for all teachers and need expanding in the 'quality driven' phase, an issue recognised in the school's development plan.

Students enjoy coming to school and comment on their enjoyment of learning as well as what they gain from the social aspects of the school. Students' personal development and well-being are good as a result of the efforts the school has made to develop the good care, guidance and support that it now provides for students. The curriculum is also good, with a range of academic and vocational subjects.

Much of the school's current success stems from the outstanding communication of the school's vision by its headteacher. The extensive improvement under the current senior leadership team is recognised by governors and staff. Older students also comment on the great improvement that has taken place over the last five years and, even though they have had a relatively short time in the school, younger students comment on positive changes in the last year. Illustrating

this during the inspection one student said, 'Teachers here respect you and that means we show them respect.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the active engagement of students in their learning to all lessons in all subjects.
- Devise ways of developing students' independence further, particularly in learning.
- Move to a more targeted approach to professional development, coaching those staff who need most support while maintaining the collegiate approach currently used to share good practice.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students achieve well although standards are well below average. Students join the school with well below average standards in national tests, and very few incoming students have achieved the highest levels at the end of their primary education. Although standards are still well below average at the end of Year 9, students make good progress in Years 7 to 9. This is partly because some of the teaching they receive is good or better, but also because the school has established a very strong emphasis on achieving challenging targets. In 2006, test results dipped slightly, especially in English, but students are on course for a return to a pattern of improving results in 2007.

The 2006 GCSE examination results showed that standards were well below average at the end of Year 11 and that students' achievement was satisfactory. Despite a dip in the overall GCSE results, the percentage of students who gained five or more grades A* to C including functional English and mathematics increased, reflecting the emphasis placed by the school on literacy and numeracy. The number of students in the current Year 11 who already have GCSE assessments in some subjects for 2007 shows that the school is on course for a significant rise in the percentage achieving five or more grades A* to C this year. Again, the very clear targets set for students and their regular review has helped many students to achieve greater success and the school's curriculum arrangements now mean many more students are taking a full range of GCSE or equivalent examinations.

Students with English as an additional language have made slower progress than other students, particularly in Years 7 to 9, something recognised by the school in its data analysis. This has resulted in targeted support for these students and professional development for relevant staff as priorities in the current development plan. There are few differences between the achievements of other groups.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students are clear that the school has changed radically over recent years and that, even in the last year, behaviour and students' attitudes have become better still. They recognise the much stronger emphasis in the school on high achievement and how this has improved their motivation. Students' behaviour is good and they generally show very positive attitudes to their work, responding enthusiastically in class and showing courtesy and politeness in moving about the school. Students note a significant reduction in bullying and are confident that any rare occurrences are dealt with swiftly and successfully by staff. The level of racial harmony among students is very high, with students from all backgrounds valuing the diversity of cultures

represented in the school. As a result, students feel very safe in the school. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Attendance is below the national average, although the school follows up all absences very thoroughly.

The very high proportion of students taking part in extra-curricular sport and healthy choices of school meals means that students respond well to the need to keep healthy and fit. The school council is effective in bringing about improvements to the school, particularly to its buildings and facilities, and in obtaining students' views of aspects of the school. Charity events support an increasing involvement with the community outside school, for example through the Junior Sports Leaders Award, although this is not extensive. Students are well prepared for future opportunities, with a higher than average 92.5% of Year 11 students moving to further education or employment in 2006. Students benefit from a range of commercial links and from work experience in Year 10.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has had a strong focus on improving teaching and learning recently and students now take part in well structured lessons that move their learning on. Students know at which level they are working and the level or grade that they are aiming for. They are also very clear about how they need to change their work to reach their targets. This in itself has brought about improvements in the progress students make. In addition, good and very good teaching in many lessons supports this improvement, but teaching of this quality is not consistent across all staff. Too much teaching does not actively engage students, for example through the group or paired activities that are used in other lessons. As a result, students in some classes are not always encouraged to be independent in their thinking, relying heavily on their teacher. All students with learning difficulties and disabilities have their individual targets in their books, like other students, and teachers have access to individual education plans to support planning. As a result, much lesson planning takes account of individual students' needs very well. Several parents, however, feel that not enough homework is set.

The school has a very clear view about the overall quality of teaching through its frequent monitoring and analysis of students' work. Senior leaders accurately identify good features of teaching and where improvement is needed, giving clear feedback to teachers to support them. Very thorough individual action plans are in place where more extensive support is needed. Teachers also undertake peer observations within their subject and in other subjects. These are particularly successful in sharing good practice across the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum and its overall quality is good. An extensive range of sports opportunities has a very high take up rate and other out of school activities are well supported. In Years 7 to 9, the school makes extensive use of smaller groups of about 20 students to support learning. A basic skills course for lower achieving students links directly with a similar course in Years 10 and 11 and provides good continuity of learning. Gifted and talented students are involved in a good range of enrichment courses, for example a mathematics road show for local schools hosted in the school. In 2006, some Year 11 students took courses that did not result in GCSE or equivalent qualifications and this had an adverse

impact on their overall GCSE scores. This year, the school has ensured that nearly all students in Years 10 and 11 are taking eight or more GCSE or equivalent examinations to rectify this, within the school's three learning pathways (Advanced, Higher and Foundation). The range of vocational courses provided is enhanced through the school's participation in Birmingham's South Network 14-19 Collegiate. The impact of the school's careers education and personal, social and health education programmes was noted positively in a previous specialist inspection in 2004. The school's status as a specialist mathematics and computing college has done much to increase the use of ICT in supporting learning, for example using PLATO software with students who would benefit from additional support. Other elements, such as capitalising on the leadership that could be provided by students with specific talents, are not as well advanced.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Student guidance has a high profile in the school, with learning development managers and tutors providing good pastoral and academic support for all students. Good links with external services provide specialist support where it is needed. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities have clear individual education plans that are available to all staff electronically. Teaching assistants, who have received in-school training, are deployed within subjects and work closely with teachers, playing a very active part in lessons. Specialist support for early English language learners is similarly well deployed. The development of the learning support unit into a preventative centre for students who have challenging behaviour is too recent for its impact to be evaluated as, although the total number of days of exclusion has reduced, the number of fixed-period exclusions has risen slightly. Permanent exclusions have reduced significantly in the last year.

The school's main strength is the work it has done in setting a culture of high achievement for all through the use of target-setting and review. Annual targets are discussed with parents during a dedicated day and are reviewed regularly. Already challenging, the targets are revised upwards where students achieve early success. Students are very clear about the level at which they are working and what they need to do to move from their current standards to those set out by their targets in each subject. As a result, the school has students who are highly aware of the school's expectations of them as learners and respond to them very well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's recent transformation stems from the appointment of the current headteacher a few weeks before the previous inspection in January 2003. Since then, a completely new leadership team has communicated a very clear vision for the school. Increasing numbers of parents selecting the school for their children have widened the area from which it draws students, and parents support the school strongly.

The main impact of the new leadership has been to restructure staffing, to change the ethos of the school into one of high achievement, and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The leadership team has been very successful in the first two areas and has also supported much improvement in the quality of teaching. However, inconsistencies in the way staff interpret the middle part of the three-part lesson structure adopted by the school has resulted in students not being as active in their learning in some lessons as they are in others. Subject leaders are

also not always sufficiently clear in department reviews about the impact of changes they have made. Extensive professional development has taken place to support the changes made and this has been effective in bringing about improved achievement. The resulting wide range of skills among the staff means that the school's approach to professional development does not differentiate sufficiently between those who need extensive support through coaching and those who are themselves able to share their good practice with others.

The governance of the school is good, with the governing body and its committees challenging the school over its performance and taking a full part in setting out future plans. The school's financial management is secure, risks assessments are carried out as appropriate and procedures for safeguarding students are fully in place. Its main building, due for redevelopment from 2009 under the national Building Schools for the Future programme, presents considerable barriers to learning.

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Annex A

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?	2
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	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?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
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	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Dear Students

Inspection of King's Heath Boys' Mathematics and Computing College, Birmingham B13 0RJ

Thank you for your welcome when I inspected your school this week. I valued the contributions you made to the inspection when you spoke with me in groups, in lessons, and between lessons. You expressed your views openly and clearly and this helped me a lot in my work.

I am sure you will be pleased to know that yours is a good school. You were very clear that it has improved substantially in the last few years, particularly in students' behaviour and in teaching. You spoke very positively about the way you value the diversity of cultures in the school and this matches my view that your personal development is good. This is partly due to the work of the school's senior staff in setting out a vision of a school in which you can succeed. It is also because teachers and other staff have changed what they do so that you make better progress in lessons. The way you know your targets and what you need to do to reach them is a great strength of the school, and several of you told me how these had been revised upwards because you had already achieved them. The school also supports you well when you need help.

As in any school, there is still more to do, particularly in renewing the main building. Until that happens, however, I have asked your headteacher and staff to work on three things.

- Make sure all lessons involve you actively in learning.
- Find ways of helping you become more independent, particularly when you work on your own.
- Have a more varied programme for staff training.

You can play your part, of course, by maintaining your enthusiasm for learning and making sure your attendance level is as high as it can be. Thank you again for your help on this inspection.

Yours sincerely

Frank Knowles Lead inspector