



Thomas Keble School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115727
Local Authority Gloucestershire
Inspection number 290318
Inspection dates 23–24 January 2007
Reporting inspector Mary Ryan HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Eastcombe
School category	Foundation		Stroud
Age range of pupils	11–16		GL6 7DY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01452 770301
Number on roll (school)	692	Fax number	01452 770093
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Nigel Warner
		Headteacher	Chris Steer
Date of previous school inspection	25 February 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	23–24 January 2007	290318

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Thomas Keble School is a comprehensive school with Foundation status. It is one of five schools serving the Stroud valleys, two of which are selective schools. The school has increased in size over the last five years and is now oversubscribed. The number of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. There are no students who have English as an additional language. The school obtained specialist status in technology in 2002, and in September 2006 took on a second specialism in sport.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Thomas Keble is a good school which provides good value for money. It is well regarded by students, parents and the community. Under the effective leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, there is a strong commitment from all teaching and support staff to provide the best for all students. The quality of leadership is good. The school acted decisively on the recommendations from its previous inspection in 2002; the improved standards already evident at the time of that inspection have been sustained and improved further. Performance data are used increasingly well to set targets and track the progress of students.

These improvements are reflected in how the school is perceived by the local community. The number of students on roll has increased by a quarter since the time of the previous inspection and there are now more applications than there are places. One parent of a student in Year 11 wrote to inspectors, 'We are extremely delighted with the exceptional progress, support and education that our son has received'; a parent of a student in Year 7 wrote, 'she is thriving academically and as a bright child is being challenged to achieve her full potential'; and a parent of a student with learning difficulties wrote, 'I am extremely impressed by the education provision...'

The school monitors and evaluates its performance well. It has introduced a number of strategies to improve teaching and learning and these are making a difference in the classroom. There is a collegiate approach to this work and some departments, such as mathematics and physical education (PE), are leading the way in monitoring students' achievement and enhancing teaching and learning. However, the information gathered through these monitoring activities is not yet used systematically to drive improvement.

Most students know how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve further. As a result the vast majority of students make significant progress during their time at Thomas Keble; progress between the ages of 11 and 14 is particularly marked. Teaching is good overall, with all lessons observed at least satisfactory. Some students, while compliant, lack independence as learners and do not engage fully with all activities in lessons. In some classes technology is used extremely effectively to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

The personal development and well-being of students are good. They behave well and show consideration to each other and to visitors. Attendance has improved and is now good. Relationships between students and between students and staff are good. The care, guidance and support of students are good, and for students with learning difficulties and disabilities they are impressive. The school curriculum meets the needs of students and offers a very wide range of extra-curricular activities which are very popular.

The achievement of specialist status in technology and more recently the addition of a second specialism in sport have enabled the school to broaden its curriculum, significantly improve resources and apply sharper focus to its work.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend students' independent learning skills by building on the existing expertise within the school to ensure that they take a more active part in their learning.
- Use more consistently and effectively the information gathered through the monitoring of performance and teaching and learning across the school to drive improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Overall students achieve well and some achieve very well. Although attainment on entry to the school at age 11 in September 2006 was at the national average, in previous years it was below the national average. Over the last three years students have consistently achieved at the national average at age 14; this represents significant progress during Key Stage 3 given their starting points and is better than that in many other similar schools.

At Key Stage 4 results in 2003 to 2005 were just above the national average at GCSE. There was a dip in the proportion attaining five higher grade GCSEs in 2006, although the results in English and mathematics rose again in 2006. The school is now working on raising achievement even further at Key Stage 4. Progress between the ages of 11 and 16 is good.

Students with learning difficulties and disabilities achieve well overall.

There is some variation in the achievement and progress of students within different subjects and the school is working hard to address this through extending the academic mentoring programme and departmental tracking of performance.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Students enjoy school and are keen to learn as demonstrated by their positive attitudes. Their confidence and self-esteem are enhanced through a good range of opportunities, particularly in sport, and through their many contributions to the community. Students say they feel safe in school and that they know who to go to if problems arise. The behaviour of most students is good in lessons and around the school. Students commented that incidents of bullying are rare and that if any occur, they are dealt with quickly and effectively. They are well informed about how to live healthy lives and put in practice the good advice they receive in lessons and through the personal, social and health education programme. Students contribute to the making of decisions through the school and year councils. For example, the views of students have influenced the plans to improve the quality of school meals and the timing of design and technology units, enabling them to stay longer with the same member of staff. However, some students feel that they do not know enough about the decisions made by their representatives. Attendance has

improved as a result of more rigorous monitoring, closer contact with parents and internal reward systems for good attendance; it is now good. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers are skilled in establishing a calm and orderly working atmosphere where students make good progress. In the good and outstanding lessons, teachers provide a variety of creative activities and they set high expectations of both the level and the pace of the work. In these lessons, students have very positive attitudes and enjoy their learning. However, some lessons do not spark students' imaginations and they spend too long listening; consequently, they remain passive and do not develop fully their independent learning skills.

The school is accurate in its evaluation of the quality of its teaching and senior and middle leaders know the strengths and developmental needs of their staff. An increasingly co-ordinated programme of lesson observations monitors the quality of teaching and provides feedback, support and training for teachers. For example, as a result of a recent focus on assessment for learning, objectives are now being set and reviewed in most lessons, a feature valued by students. The use of data and assessment to support learning and set targets is good in some departments. This effective practice is now being shared and developed across all subject areas. As a result, students generally know their levels or grades and what they need to do to improve. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well both in lessons and in small group work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Overall, the curriculum is good and meets the needs of most students. The school is flexible in its approach to meeting these needs. Its specialist status as a Technology and Sports college has resulted in the enrichment of the curriculum through the use of information and communication technology across departments and the wide range of sporting activities. This has had a positive impact on the learning experience of students. In recent years the school has provided an additional pathway through increasing the range of vocational courses. This has extended its curriculum offer and there are plans to develop this provision further.

The school works well with its partner primary schools on developing and sharing subject expertise. In addition, there are growing links with local schools and colleges to provide additional qualifications for students; for example, a European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) course.

Many students take part in the impressive range of enrichment activities both during lunchtime and after school. There are many opportunities for sport and performing

art. The curriculum is also enhanced by other opportunities such as visiting speakers, theatre groups and educational visits at home and abroad, all of which broaden students' understanding of their own and other cultures; the international dimension of the school has received external recognition. Work experience, careers education, citizenship and enterprise education prepare students well for life beyond school, with a very high percentage entering training or continuing their education.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support for students are good. Students are treated with respect and dignity and their social responsibility is shown in their consideration for others. Students are encouraged to discuss personal problems or concerns and feel confident about approaching an adult or another student. Child protection and health and safety procedures are established. The need to train a child protection officer following the departure of the previous post holder is in hand. The school has increased its focus on academic mentoring and guidance, including the use of internal and external mentors to raise aspirations and achievement. There are good arrangements for identifying and supporting vulnerable students and those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Good support for these students is enhanced by the school's liaison with a wide range of support agencies and through the work of very effective teaching and learning support assistants. The learning support department has good links with parents and carers, who rightly praise its work highly. Students say they are well prepared for joining the school and that in Year 9 the arrangements for making their Key Stage 4 option choices are comprehensive. Advice on post-16 education and career choice is equally valued by students.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school is well led and managed. The headteacher has developed a team of staff whose work to shape the direction of the school to raise standards and promote high quality care and education is outstanding.

The senior team has been given responsibilities appropriate to their expertise and middle managers take on their roles and accountabilities enthusiastically. While management procedures within departments are good the best practice has not always been incorporated into a whole school approach. Governance is good. Under the leadership of an able and dedicated chair, governors, many of whom are only recent appointments, provide support and challenge. They are not, however, sufficiently involved in the direct monitoring of all school activities.

Systems for monitoring the work of the school are good, reflected by an accurate self-evaluation, and changes are made when needed to help raise standards. New appointments and organisational changes have been possible as student numbers increased but not all have had sufficient time to be reflected in results. In addition to the performance management reviews the school carries out year group reviews and

'department in focus' reviews to identify where support is needed to ensure improvement.

The school's progress as a Technology College has been impressive with clear benefits to students' learning; additional benefits through the improved facilities such as the sports hall are already evident. Significant building work has taken place on the site but some provision is still restricted by small rooms or temporary buildings.

Financial management is very secure and the school provides good value for money. The views of the vast majority of parents are overwhelmingly positive in what is an increasingly popular school. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the capacity to improve further is good.

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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?	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	2
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	2
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?	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.

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	1
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

Thank you for the welcome that you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting many of you in lessons, in discussion groups and at lunch and break times. We were impressed by your politeness, courtesy and your pride in your school.

Like you, we think that your school is good. Many of you told us that you enjoy your lessons and appreciate the facilities, in particular the new technology and the new sports hall, and you feel well supported by your teachers and the support staff. The following points are what we found to be the school's key strengths:

- Your headteacher and the staff want the very best for you and do excellent work in setting the direction for the school so that you achieve well and are supported in your learning.
- You are taught well and most of you make good progress during your time at the school.
- Your relationships with each other and with your teachers are very good. Your attitudes to learning and behaviour are good and in some cases very good.
- Many of you have opportunities to contribute to decisions in your school through year councils and the school council.
- You told us that you feel safe in school and that any problems are resolved quickly.
- The range of clubs, activities, trips and visits available to you is impressive and many of you take full advantage of these.

Even in good schools like yours there are things that can be improved. The teaching and learning in the school are good overall and we feel that they could improve even further. We have asked the school to give more of you the chance to take greater responsibility for your learning through training and encouraging you to participate more fully in lessons and in small group discussions and activities. We have also asked the senior staff in the school to do further work on pulling together the information that they are collecting on how well you are doing so that you can make even better progress by the time you leave.

Thank you again, and on behalf of the inspection team I wish you all every success for the future.