

Kelvin Hall School: Specialist Science College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118103
Local Authority	Kingston-upon-Hull
Inspection number	291024
Inspection dates	31 January –1 February 2007
Reporting inspector	Marianne Young HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	991
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Humphrey Forrest
Headteacher	Mr Martin R Doolan
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001
School address	Bricknell Avenue Hull HU5 4QH
Telephone number	01482 342229
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Age group	11–16
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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

Kelvin Hall is a mixed 11 to 16 comprehensive school of average size situated in the northern outskirts of Hull. The number of students entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also broadly average. However the proportion of students with a statement of special educational need is below that found nationally. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Kelvin Hall gained specialist science college status in 2006. The school has recently been re-awarded, for the third time, the International School Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Kelvin Hall School is oversubscribed and most parents are happy with the school. It enjoys a good reputation locally. The school provides students with a satisfactory education. The senior leadership team has an accurate view of the weaknesses of the school and what needs to be done to improve them. The headteacher and senior staff set a clear agenda for improvement and, together with the governing body, successfully led the application for specialist science college status in 2006. Most of the weaknesses identified in the last inspection report have been tackled effectively. Nevertheless, the statutory requirements for information and communication technology (ICT) are still not met for students in Years 10 and 11. The senior leadership team is devolving more leadership responsibility to middle leaders, including the monitoring and evaluation of performance. However, middle managers apply quality assurance procedures inconsistently and as a result there is variation in the quality of teaching and learning within and across different departments. This disparity adversely affects students' performance in some subjects.

A general rise in standards was maintained in 2006, especially at Key Stage 3. Conversely, at GCSE the proportion of students gaining five A* to C grades including English and mathematics fell to below average. Students in Years 7 to 9 make good progress relative to their starting points. In Years 10 and 11 students' progress is satisfactory. Despite continuing to progress well in English, students do not perform well enough in other subjects, including mathematics and in ICT. Well targeted support and recent changes to the curriculum especially, but not exclusively, for those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are proving effective in raising standards for some students.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some challenging and imaginative teaching, but some work is not well matched to the learning needs of students. This, combined with a limited variety of teaching styles, means that sometimes students are insufficiently involved in their learning, remaining too passive during lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory. The number of vocational and work-related courses offered to students in Years 10 and 11 has recently increased. This choice of courses helps to equip all students with the skills they need in order to continue into further education and training. A significant proportion of students, including those who are gifted and talented, regularly enjoy the broad range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

Governance is satisfactory and there is effective financial management and deployment of the school's resources. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Rigorously track the progress made by students so that underachievement can be quickly identified and tackled.
- Improve the quality of learning by using a range of teaching strategies that engage and motivate students.
- Improve the accountability of all middle leaders.
- Improve the quality of provision in ICT to meet statutory requirements.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall. Provisional results in the 2006 national tests for Key Stage 3 show that standards are rising. Standards for students at the end of Year 9 are above average in English, mathematics and science. More students than is expected nationally also reached the higher levels. Boys achieved better than girls in mathematics and science but less well in English. The proportion of students who gained five A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, fell in 2006 to below that expected of students at the end of Year 11. There was significant underperformance in mathematics. However, the number of students gaining five passes at A* to C level in GCSE or equivalent qualifications increased. This maintained previous years' trend of improving results.

The progress students make is satisfactory overall. It is more rapid and is good for students in Key Stage 3, where teaching often promotes better learning. The rigour with which progress is monitored is too variable and this has led to previous underachievement, especially in mathematics and ICT, going unnoticed. The school recognises the need to continue to raise standards and reduce the inconsistency in performance between subjects. The school has reduced the number of students who leave school with no qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Students' personal development and well-being are satisfactory. The behaviour of students is satisfactory. They generally behave well in lessons, even when the teaching fails to capture their interest or when they are not actively involved in their learning. However, around the school there are many instances of boisterous behaviour, often when students move along the crowded routes in between lessons. Attendance has improved. Despite the hard work undertaken to improve all students' attendance, these measures are yet to raise the attendance of some Year 11 students. Poor attendance adversely affects the progress made by these students. Students feel safe in school and bullying is not seen as an issue. Students know what to do if they need support and guidance. The student support coordinators are effective in this respect and students speak warmly of their work.

Opportunities are sometimes missed to promote students' spiritual development. For instance, the time given by some form tutors for students to reflect on issues during tutor time in the mornings is cursory. Conversely, students' cultural development is good. This is largely as a result of the well established international dimension in the school, enabling students to make a valued contribution to the community through a variety of links and partnerships. Students have a good understanding of how to live and eat healthily, but despite this the pupils interviewed reported that many pupils choose to leave the site at lunchtime and this was confirmed by direct observation. The dining facilities are too small for the current number of students in the school and this adversely affects opportunities for social interaction. Literacy skills are promoted well in many lessons but students' ICT skills are underdeveloped.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the best lessons teachers' planning is rigorous, providing a range of learning activities which challenge and stretch the different ability levels in their classes. Students understand their targets, and teachers give them specific guidance how to improve their work. Teachers use a range of techniques, including questioning, paired and group work, to engage students and enable them to make good progress in lessons. This practice contrasts with less effective lessons, where planning is weak and does not cater well enough for students' different abilities. Students' understanding of their current level of achievement is unclear and they are given little guidance about the steps they must take in order to improve. In some lessons students become passive listeners. They are not motivated to make the expected progress in these lessons since activities are not varied or demanding enough. The quality of marking is too variable across subjects. In the books reviewed, marking was inconsistent and in a significant number, there was no marking. Too often it is cursory and gives students little guidance on how to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory, meets statutory requirements for students in Years 7 to 9, and provides appropriate opportunities for all learners, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, despite some recent developments, the school still does not meet the statutory requirements for ICT for students in Years 10 and 11. This was a key issue at the time of the last inspection.

In Years 10 and 11, students have an increasingly wide choice of subjects and courses including a number with vocational links. These courses have helped re-engage some learners. Work-related learning provides students with adequate opportunities to practise the skills and attitudes they will need to succeed in their future careers. The effective links developed by the school with the West Hull Consortium, and Wyke College in particular, are increasing choice and ensure that students' progression routes are clear when they leave Kelvin Hall School. The transition classes for less able students are well structured, supported by a core tutor, a subject teacher and a specialist teaching assistant.

The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are popular and are well attended. Particularly effective and enjoyable is the 'Rock Challenge' where inspectors saw around 120 students developing dance routines. They described their determination to do better this year than previously, in the competition against other local schools. Students who are gifted and talented take part in activities and special projects that extend their skills and raise their aspirations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The quality of care, guidance and support for learners is satisfactory overall. All staff are committed to supporting the students and systems are in place to help this happen. The requirements for child protection and safeguarding are met, including appropriate risk assessments for specific subjects and trips. However, currently the school has no system to

monitor the number of students who choose to leave the school site at lunchtime. Vulnerable students are particularly well supported through the use of the targeted classes and help from assistants. The students in the social inclusion unit follow a modified timetable, involving teaching from members of the senior leadership and other staff.

Students are given appropriate guidance when choosing options in Year 9 and when making career and post-16 decisions in Year 11. The systems to track academic progress are not used with sufficient rigour by all staff to check that all students make the progress expected of them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management of the school, including its governance, are satisfactory. The headteacher, supported, by an effective senior leadership team, sets a clear direction for the school and provides the impetus to move the school forward. This is seen, for instance, in the achievement of specialist science college status, awarded this year. Senior staff set clear expectations for both staff and students. The school runs well on a day-to-day basis, despite the constraints of the accommodation. Through a committed approach to raising standards and thoughtful leadership, the headteacher has delegated appropriately the functions of leadership and management both at senior and middle levels. Despite all departments having appropriate systems in place to track the progress made by students, they are not used effectively or consistently enough by some middle managers to ensure that all students make good progress. In some departments underachievement or other shortcomings are not picked up early enough.

The school's systems for monitoring its quality of the education provide a realistic view of its strengths and weaknesses. However, they are not applied consistently enough across the school to be used as a diagnostic tool to raise achievement. Links with the family of schools, colleges, businesses and the community are good and the school has recently strengthened these through their science specialist activities. The science college plan has been carefully thought through to make an impact across the school and the local community. It is, however, too early to measure its overall effectiveness.

Governors are very committed to the school and show a good knowledge of its activities, bringing appropriate challenge to senior leaders. They ensure that resources and finances are managed efficiently and they have worked hard on long term plans to improve the accommodation.

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards of literacy have risen, and attendance rates have improved. Shortcomings in ICT remain, although there are plans to address them. Nevertheless the senior team has the capacity to bring about the further improvements required.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
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	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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	3

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?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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

Kelvin Hall School: Specialist Science College

Bricknell Avenue

Hull

HU5 4QH

2 February 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for the courtesy and welcome you extended to us during our recent visit. We appreciated the time you gave to talk to us about your work and about the activities many of you take part in.

We found that Kelvin Hall is a satisfactory school and helps you to make progress in your studies. You generally behave well in lessons, but some of you are too boisterous with each other when moving around the school and at break times. The inspectors were pleased that for many of you, your attendance has improved, however some older students must ensure that they also come to school regularly. It was obvious that many of you enjoy the new courses available and also the range of activities and trips available to you all. The new courses are helping you to continue learning or training once you have left school in order to get the skills and qualifications you will need to help you succeed in life.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to do some things to help improve your education and you need to play your part in achieving them.

- Increase the different methods of teaching and make sure that you are all involved and contribute in lessons.
- Make sure every department checks and monitors carefully the progress you are all making in different subjects.
- Improve the provision for ICT, especially for those of you in Years 10 and 11.

We wish you all success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Marianne Young

Her Majesty's Inspector