

Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120632
Local Authority	LINCOLNSHIRE
Inspection number	291806
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Elaine Taylor HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1046
6th form	249
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr J Kinder
Headteacher	Mr G Burks
Date of previous school inspection	19 March 2001
School address	Sandon Road Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 9AU
Telephone number	01476 563017
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Age group	11–18
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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

Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School is a selective secondary school recruiting students from the top 25% of the ability range. Fewer than average students are eligible for free school meals or have learning difficulties or disabilities. There are very few students who do not have English as their first language and a below average number of students comes from minority ethnic groups. The school has specialist status in science and mathematics.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school which is emerging from a particularly difficult period. Following a change in leadership, the interim headteacher has had a positive impact, which has been recognised by all. It is improving rapidly and has many good and some outstanding features. The parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the changes he has made and acknowledge the dramatic impact these changes have had on the atmosphere in the school. One parent said that her daughters have 'commented daily on the improvements within the school and how everyone is moving forward in a positive manner'.

Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed successfully. More recently those raised by the local authority have also been tackled and progress has been made. Self-evaluation is accurate in identifying the main strengths and areas for development. New structures have been put in place to monitor the work of the school and tackle the variation in the quality of teaching and learning, but they have not yet had time to ensure consistency across subjects. Progress has been most noticeable in improving the ethos and in tackling poor behaviour. Students take pride in their surroundings and the buildings are tidy and well cared for.

When students enter the school they have attained standards which are well above average. They make good progress and achieve standards at the end of Year 11 which are exceptionally and consistently high. In 2006 the percentage of students who achieved 5 GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics was 95%, which is more than twice the national average. The school's tracking data shows the rising trend since 2005 has been maintained in 2007.

There is a good curriculum which meets the needs of all students well. For the most able students there are already extra subjects available such as astronomy, but the school needs to ensure their needs are better met across the curriculum by including planned opportunities in all lessons to stretch and challenge them. Specialist status in mathematics and science has had a positive impact on many aspects of the school's work.

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Girls have positive attitudes and enjoy school as shown in their excellent attendance and good behaviour. They participate well in sporting activities and are aware of how to stay healthy. Most are self-confident and ready to take the initiative and this together with their high attainment gives the students the skills required to achieve economic success in their future lives. Good care and support ensure they feel safe and the most vulnerable students are helped to succeed as well as the rest. The school has effective links with outside agencies to support the progress of all students. Parents regularly receive information about their daughters' progress, but students and their parents receive insufficient guidance on how they can improve.

Teaching is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. There is a significant degree of variation in the quality of teaching across the school. In the vast majority of lessons students make good progress because they are attentive independent learners. However, in other classes, teachers fail to provide them with opportunities to work together to apply their knowledge and understanding and they consequently remain too passive and their progress is only satisfactory. In the very best lessons, in contrast, where they are challenged and inspired, their progress is outstanding.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has successfully created a climate where all leaders in the school are clearly focused on improving standards and achievement. Changes to the management structure are still not fully implemented, but team leaders are

now monitored more rigorously by the senior team and are enthusiastic about the opportunities the new structure will give them to evaluate the work in their areas of responsibility more effectively. The significant improvements already evident indicate the school has good capacity to improve further. The new governing body is satisfactory. The school is financially secure and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form are good. Standards in 2006 were high and achievement was good. School data indicates a rising trend with attainment expected to improve further in 2007. Students' achievements, when compared with the well-above average standards on entry to the sixth form, are good. However, progress is variable with limited progress in some subject areas, such as humanities, and excellent in others, such as science. Students' personal development and the guidance provided in preparing for their future education and employment are excellent, and they speak highly of the support they receive. Attendance is monitored carefully and is good. Students are aware of their learning goals and their progress against targets is effectively monitored, although students do not always have detailed enough help on how to improve their grades. Although leadership and management of the sixth form are good, the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning lacks rigour.

What the school should do to improve further

- Reduce inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that more is good or outstanding.
- Improve the rigour of monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school at all levels.
- Improve provision to fully meet the needs of the most able.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' achievement is good overall and standards are exceptionally high. Based upon 2006 results, standards were exceptionally high at the end of Year 9 and for GCSEs, and targets were met. GCSE results were better than those in 2005. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 for the higher levels were significantly higher than national averages in each of the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, as were higher grades at GCSE. Convincing evidence provided by the school indicates that this improving trend is continuing and the school is set to exceed its challenging targets. From their well above average starting points students make good progress. In 2006 achievement overall was satisfactory. Inspection evidence shows that achievement improved in 2007 and is now good overall. Evidence from lessons confirms these improvements. Progress made by students with learning difficulties and disabilities is similar to that of all other students.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are very confident and frequently take the initiative in organising and taking part in competitions and events such as

the recent highly successful 'Rock Challenge', the forthcoming 'Showcase' and the 'Mock Bar Trial'. They enjoy the many opportunities to take responsibility and older students support the younger ones as mentors. Attendance is outstanding and absences are followed up well. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school, although there is inconsistency in the way in which the behaviour policy is applied. The exclusion rate is very low. Students acquire an outstanding understanding of spiritual, moral and ethical issues across subjects and in assemblies. The cultural backgrounds of groups of students are celebrated through festivals and displays. There is a high level of social awareness and the students take part in projects to help others locally, nationally and globally. They adopt healthy lifestyles by taking advantage of sporting activities provided by the school. They also choose healthy options in the canteen and drink plenty of water.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. The specialist focus on science has been used well in the development of innovative and effective practice. There has been whole school training in these new approaches, but as yet they are not implemented fully across the school. The school acknowledges that there is considerable variation in the quality of teaching and learning and has put new structures in place to share and extend the good practice where necessary.

Teachers prepare lessons well to build on prior learning and to meet course and examination requirements. In good lessons key learning points are helpfully shared with students at the start and learning is reviewed at the end. However there are not enough opportunities identified in lesson plans to stretch and challenge the most able students. Teachers regularly mark and grade students' work, but assessment practice within lessons, including the use of skilful questioning, is not consistently used across the school. Some teachers talk for too long. The most effective teaching involves students in engaging, interesting activities which challenge them, develop their higher order thinking skills and value their contributions. Students show remarkable initiative and can organise themselves to research and analyse materials and to present and evaluate findings. This helps them to make good progress. They are articulate and confident young women and, particularly in the sixth form, they are able to engage in high level intellectual discussion with their teachers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good across the school. In the lower school, the students study a broad range of subjects including the creative arts, information and communication technology (ICT) and two foreign languages. They also follow a learning skills course which supports their progress in all lessons.

Students in Years 10 and 11 have a wide choice of options, but there is little opportunity at present to take applied or vocational subjects. There are, however, active links with business and industry to help students develop the necessary skills for the wider world of work. In the

sixth form, partnership arrangements with a local school ensure that all students gain appropriate academic qualifications for successful entry to higher education.

The school's 'specialist science' status has been thoughtfully used to provide enrichment courses in statistics, astronomy and the public understanding of science. High attaining and talented students are challenged further by participation in national projects. Increasingly some are entered for examinations earlier than the rest of the cohort so that they can move on to more demanding work.

Most students benefit from the many extracurricular activities and high numbers of sixth form students take part in the 'Young Enterprise Scheme'.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides good care, guidance and support. Transition arrangements are well-organised and students receive good advice about their future options. Vulnerable students are monitored and liaison between the school and outside agencies is highly successful. A team of non-teaching pastoral staff ensures that concerns are followed up quickly and effectively. The girls report that any concerns they might express about bullying are taken seriously, although some parents felt that these are not always followed up promptly. However, the school's safeguarding procedures are very clear and child protection systems are robust. Systems are in place for tracking students' progress and identifying those who are underachieving, although there are some inconsistencies in the ways in which students are guided towards achieving identified targets. Marking is completed but does not always include helpful comments on how to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school's leadership and management are good and have significantly improved under the good leadership of the new headteacher. Managers at all levels share a clear vision for improvement, although there remains some inconsistency between individual departments in how well this vision is turned into actions which lead to improved performance. Recent changes that have been made to the way the school monitors its work are leading to greater accuracy in its self-evaluation. Structures are in place to ensure that weaknesses in teaching and learning are starting to be addressed. Staff morale has greatly improved and newly qualified staff are well supported. New strategies, such as the new behaviour policy, have had a strong impact. The school has a good capacity to improve further. The newly formed governing body has a clear understanding of the school and are now better placed to offer critical challenge. The vast majority of parents are satisfied with the standard of education which the school offers. Teachers are suitably qualified and experienced. Resources are used well, although some sixth form lessons take place in poor accommodation. The school manages its finances well and provides good value for money.

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

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
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	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
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 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	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	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	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

22 June 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Kesteven and Grantham Girls' School, Sandon Road, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG31 9AU

On behalf of myself and my colleagues I want to say how much we enjoyed visiting your school and how good it was to meet such mature, polite and articulate young women. You helped us greatly in our work and I am writing to tell you about our findings, but I hope many of you will also read the full report.

We found that the school has many good features. These include;

- the progress you are all now making in your work
- your good behaviour and the consideration you show for each other
- the way the headteacher and his team lead the school
- the good range of subjects you can study and the many activities in which you can take part
- the good teaching in the sixth form.

We found your personal development to be outstanding and were very impressed by your ability to take the initiative and your appreciation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. Your attendance is excellent and you reach exceptionally high standards in tests and examinations.

You said you feel safe and you are confident that adults in the school will help if you have problems. You appreciate extra opportunities the school provides for trips and musical events like the 'Rock Challenge'. You are aware of the need to take exercise and follow a healthy diet.

We think there are some things the school could do to make your progress even better. We have asked that the following development points should be addressed.

- The leaders of the school should monitor more closely how well the school works.
- They should make sure that all your lessons are at least good and as many as possible are outstanding.
- The school should give those of you who are capable of reaching the highest levels work which stretches you and more opportunities to develop your special talents.

You can help by asking your teachers to show you how to improve your work and by taking every opportunity in lessons to develop your thinking skills. We wish you all the best for your futures.

Elaine Taylor

Her Majesty's Inspector