



Kingsmead Community School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123884
Local Authority Somerset
Inspection number 292829
Inspection date 28 November 2006
Reporting inspector David Humphries HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Wiveliscombe
School category	Community		Taunton
Age range of pupils	11–16		TA4 2NE
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01984 623483
Number on roll (school)	795	Fax number	01984 624230
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Allan Sutton
		Headteacher	Geoff Tinker
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	28 November 2006	292829

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Kingsmead is a specialist languages and humanities school, located in the market town of Wiveliscombe. The school draws students from an extensive rural area and has a large number of feeder primary schools. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is well below the national average. There are very few students from minority ethnic groups or with a first language other than English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Kingsmead is a good school with some outstanding features. There is a positive and supportive atmosphere and the great majority of students enjoy their education. One commented: 'It's such a happy place to be'. Students become confident and articulate learners who are eager to contribute to the life of the school and wider community. They are keen to take on responsibility and relish opportunities to serve as prefects, peer mentors or 'buddies' for younger students. Their views are valued by staff and governors and sometimes influence the decisions they make, for example in changes to school uniform. Most students behave well and want to succeed at school.

The school has worked hard to develop a comprehensive system for tracking students' progress. Teachers are alert to any signs of underachievement and students have a clear understanding of the levels and grades they are expected to achieve in tests and examinations. Highly committed staff provide very good support for the most vulnerable and the most challenging students. An outstanding curriculum is enhanced by productive partnerships with local colleges and organisations. There is an impressive array of academic and vocational courses for older students and these are well matched with their wide-ranging learning needs. The school uses its specialist status very effectively to develop the foreign language skills of the most able linguists.

The school has given a high priority to improving teaching and learning and this is having an impact in many lessons. Teaching is good overall and there are examples of creative and lively classroom practice which stimulates students' enthusiasm for learning. Senior leaders recognise that extending this more consistently across the school will be a key factor in ensuring that standards continue to rise.

This combination of positive attitudes, good teaching, careful tracking of progress and a first-rate curriculum has a positive impact on learning. Students make good progress throughout the school so that the standards they reach at ages 14 and 16 are above average. There is an upward trend in students' performance in GCSE examinations, and the most recent results are the best that the school has achieved.

The headteacher provides clear, determined and forward-looking leadership. He is well supported by a very able senior team and some talented middle leaders. Together they are establishing an impetus for change which is underpinned by a strong commitment to improving teaching and learning. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. They recognise the need to ensure that self-evaluation in subject departments is more rigorous and sharply focused on teaching and learning. The issues arising from the last inspection have been tackled very effectively and the school has good capacity to improve further. The school is oversubscribed and is well regarded by the great majority of parents. One parent wrote: 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds since joining Kingsmead. They are very tuned-in to his well-being and very adaptable to his needs'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Implement fully the programme of team reviews to ensure that self-evaluation in subject departments is more rigorous and sharply focused on the quality of teaching and learning.
- Build on the most effective classroom practice to ensure that the creative and stimulating teaching which is evident in some lessons is extended more consistently across the school.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with attainment which is broadly average. They make good progress during their first three years in the school so that their attainment in national tests at age 14 is significantly above average. There are some variations between subjects: students' performance in English is consistently strong, but it is less impressive in mathematics.

There is an upward trend in students' attainment at age 16 and they are now making good progress in Years 10 and 11. A slight dip in examination results in 2005 was anticipated by the school and the most recent GCSE results were significantly above average and very close to the challenging targets set by the school. Students in the current Year 11 are also making good progress and are on track to reach similar standards.

High quality support and an innovative curriculum, which is well matched with their needs, help students with a wide range of learning difficulties or disabilities to make good progress throughout the school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. The great majority of students enjoy school and are very positive about their education. Attendance is above average. Many students become articulate and confident young people with the capacity to succeed in further education or employment. Most act sensibly and safely and behave well in lessons and at breaks and lunchtimes. Students are eager to contribute to the life of the school. They enjoy opportunities to take responsibility and appreciate the ways in which their views are sought and taken into account by staff and governors. They also make a valuable contribution to the local community, for example through their involvement in a local radio station.

Students appreciate the need to adopt healthy lifestyles, and healthy eating options in the school canteen are popular. Many participate enthusiastically in a wide range of after-school sports clubs and teams.

Students' social and moral development is good. They have a strong sense of natural justice and are sensitive to the needs of others. A rich programme of foreign exchange

visits and an increasingly valuable link with an inner city school in Birmingham help to develop their awareness of other cultures and societies.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and teachers know their classes well. Some are successfully building on the ground covered in 'Learn to Learn' lessons to devise activities which are closely matched with students' aptitudes and preferred ways of learning. There is some creative and imaginative teaching which grabs students' interest and makes them want to learn. It is in these lessons that students make the most progress. When teaching is more mundane, students usually continue to get on with their work, but learning can lose a sense of momentum and purpose. Senior leaders recognise the need to extend the best practice more consistently across the school

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and very well matched with students' needs. Its breadth and diversity are impressive for a school of this size. In Year 7 and Year 9, the 'Learn to Learn' programme is well designed to help students recognise the ways in which they can learn most effectively. One student commented: 'It gives you positive thoughts and makes you believe that you can do it'.

In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum includes an imaginative blend of academic and vocational courses, some delivered in partnership with local sixth form and further education colleges. Decisive action has been taken to abandon an unsuccessful Applied information and communications technology (ICT) course in favour of a Diploma in Digital Applications. This offers greater variety and is better matched with students' interests. The school's specialist status is used very well to promote the study of foreign languages. Most students study two languages and the most able linguists take the GCSE examination in one of these at the end of Year 10. They are then able to keep in touch with this language by following an advanced level preparation course so that they are well placed for further study when they leave Kingsmead.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The school provides a safe environment where students feel secure and valued. There are effective procedures to deal with child protection issues and with the few incidents of bullying. Students feel confident about approaching adults if they are unhappy or anxious. There is a very effective and highly committed team of staff who support vulnerable and

challenging students and those with learning difficulties or disabilities. The school makes good use of the specialist support provided by a range of outside agencies.

Students' progress is tracked very carefully and there are effective systems to identify and check any underachievement. There is an increased emphasis on target setting, but this is sometimes limited to specifying an expected test level or examination grade, with little indication of what the student needs to do to achieve this.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides clear, determined and far-sighted leadership. He is well supported by a very able senior team who share his vision for the future of the school. They are successfully generating an impetus for change, with a strong emphasis on improving the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise standards and make the school even better than it is now. There are some very effective middle leaders who are relishing opportunities to show initiative and be creative.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Their analysis of performance data is very thorough and they act promptly to tackle any signs of underachievement. Regular lesson observations enable the school to form an accurate view of the quality of teaching, although there are variations in how vigorously heads of department tackle weaknesses in their areas. Senior leaders recognise that there is scope to improve the rigour of self-evaluation in subject departments. A recently introduced programme of team reviews involves a more systematic approach, with senior leaders working alongside heads of department to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning.

Governors visit the school regularly: they speak to students and staff, and spend time in lessons. They know the school very well and understand clearly what it needs to do to improve. Increasingly, they are providing senior leaders with a very helpful balance of support and challenge.

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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?	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?	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

I am sure that you will remember that your school was inspected on 28 November 2006. I enjoyed meeting with some of you and listening to your views. Many of your parents and carers completed a questionnaire to let me know how they felt about the school. I hope you will talk to them about the inspection report because it explains what your school does well and how it can become better.

Kingsmead is a good school with some outstanding features. There is a positive atmosphere and the great majority of students enjoy their education. You behave well and I was very impressed by your contributions to the life of the school and wider community. It was encouraging to see that you are eager to take on responsibility and I am glad that most of you understand the importance of adopting a health lifestyle.

The school takes good care of you and there is very good support for students who need it most. The school has good systems to keep track of your progress and make sure that you know how you are expected to perform in tests and examinations. The curriculum is outstanding: I was particularly impressed by the great variety of courses available in Years 10 and 11 and by the opportunities to learn foreign languages. It was very interesting to see how 'Learn to Learn' lessons in Years 7 and 9 are helping you to think about the ways in which you learn best.

- Good teaching helps you to make good progress throughout the school and the standards that you reach at ages 14 and 16 are above average. The 2006 GCSE examination results are the best that the school has achieved. One of the reasons that Kingsmead is a good school is that you have a very able and forward thinking headteacher who is well supported by some talented staff in key leadership and management roles. They are committed to driving through further improvements. I have asked the school to make sure that:
 - creative and stimulating teaching is extended more consistently across all subjects. You can help by responding positively when teachers ask you to work in different ways;
 - subject departments review their work in a more thorough way which involves looking closely at the quality of teaching and learning.

I wish you all the best for the future.