



King Ethelbert School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118810
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 294778
Inspection dates 6–7 December 2006
Reporting inspector John Carnaghan

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)	School address	Canterbury Road
School category	Community		Birchington
Age range of pupils	11–16		CT7 9BL
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01843 831999
Number on roll (school)	721	Fax number	01843 831015
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Neville Hudson
		Headteacher	Carole Bailey
Date of previous school inspection	25 September 2000		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–16	6–7 December 2006	294778

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

King Ethelbert School serves a deprived area on the outskirts of Margate. Many more pupils are eligible for free school meals than is usual. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and disabilities is also well above average. The school has high numbers of pupils who are in the care of the local authority. Pupils' academic standards on entry to the school are very low.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

King Ethelbert is an inspiring school that provides an outstanding education. Pupils report, 'It's a school to be proud of' and 'It's like a big family'. The key to its growing success lies in the way that everyone in the school, from the headteacher to the youngest pupil, has signed up to the same project: to make every element of education the best possible. Many pupils are from deprived backgrounds, but all strongly identify with the caring ethos of the school and relationships are cheerful and positive. This is a happy school and there is very little misbehaviour. Pupils' personal development is, like their care, outstanding, but a small group of pupils do not fully grasp what they need to do to raise their standards.

The influence and philosophy of the headteacher runs right through the school like 'Margate' through a stick of rock. She has ensured that, at first her leadership team and then all staff, have come to work collaboratively with the very best interests of pupils at heart. Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders and managers monitor the school thoroughly, checking and encouraging all staff and pupils to give of their best. Because of this, standards, while below average, are rising rapidly. Standards get better year by year and achievement is outstanding in some aspects and good overall, although English and mathematics lag behind a little. Teaching has some excellent elements and is very consistent, ensuring that learning is also outstanding. It has a powerful influence on achievement and it is a key reason behind rapid improvements. The curriculum is good. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is outstanding and the school has a strong vision to develop the curriculum in Key Stage 3.

The school judges its overall effectiveness as good rather than outstanding because it is overly modest about the cumulative effect of the high quality of teaching and its influence on achievement. The many exceptional strengths of the school and its restless quest for continuous development mean its capacity for improvement is outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that literacy and numeracy are effectively promoted in all subjects and thus further raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Ensure that the minority of pupils who do not have a clear grasp of what they should do to improve their work are brought up to the good level of understanding of most.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good between Years 7 and 11 and standards are improving rapidly. Pupils start life at school with very low levels of attainment and very few have above average skills. Many pupils have weaknesses in literacy skills, particularly in writing, but very strong teaching enables them to progress well. In 2006, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were below average. This represents outstanding achievement

given these pupils' very low starting point. Standards improved significantly in mathematics and science and targets were exceeded in all the core subjects.

Standards are also rising sharply in Key Stage 4 and achievement is good overall. In GCSE the proportion of pupils gaining five grades A*–C has risen very strongly in recent years and in 2006 the school enjoyed its best results ever. Targets were exceeded. While results at grade A*–C are still below average, at grade A*–G they exceed it. Progress in English and mathematics was less than in most other subjects but inspection evidence suggests standards are improving in the current Year 11. Art and other vocational subjects are areas of strength with standards above average.

Achievement is at least good for all groups of pupils including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. Very effective support enables looked after children to make particularly good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' moral, social, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Some pupils come from socially deprived backgrounds and arrive with emotional and behavioural issues. By the time they leave school most are confident, polite and caring young adults with high aspirations. This is because of the exceptional way in which the school treats its pupils as individuals, identifying their needs at every stage and helping them appreciate their rights and responsibilities. Many charity and fund raising activities help develop social and moral awareness with the pupils who are involved in ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) programmes taking a leading role. An excellent programme of international visits raises appreciation of different cultures and has led to the award of International School status. Horizons have been raised by such initiatives as representatives from Year 9 attending an international youth parliament in Strasbourg.

The great majority of pupils have extremely good attitudes towards school and they warmly appreciate the support and guidance they receive from all staff. Because of this, they often make excellent progress. Pupils say they greatly enjoy school life, they feel safe and well cared for. Rare occurrences of bullying are dealt with effectively. The school has made strenuous efforts to improve attendance and it is now close to the national average. A 'student voice day' was devoted to healthy lifestyles. Food technology, science, physical education and personal, social and health education also make important contributions in developing pupils' very good understanding of how to live healthily.

Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the community. The school council is consulted on all major initiatives. It has, for example, negotiated improvements in the catering service. This gives pupils a real feeling of influence and develops their social skills and self-esteem. Older pupils have many opportunities to adopt additional responsibilities as prefects and in mentoring younger pupils. These roles and the strong involvement of pupils in local community activities, develop skills that contribute well to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Interesting and lively teaching, well suited to the needs of all pupils, means that they make progress that is good and sometimes exceptional. The school has monitored the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. In consequence, teaching has improved and is consistently very effective.

Pupils rate teaching very highly. They praise the way teachers make learning enjoyable with varied activities and interesting presentations. Because of this, they thrive. Lessons are very carefully planned and provide good challenge to keep all pupils at full stretch. They have clear opening and closing elements to set the agenda for learning and to review progress before packing away. Typically, classrooms are harmonious, with extremely positive relationships between teachers and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Teachers are knowledgeable and this gives them and their pupils great confidence in promoting the best possible learning.

Lessons have a very positive atmosphere. Pupils are warmly encouraged by teachers, both verbally and through their marking. Most pupils know the level which they are currently working at and have clear ideas how to progress to meet their targets but small numbers do not receive sufficiently clear advice. Pupils know that they can turn to teachers for help at any time and that they will receive high quality support. Teachers set interesting and challenging homework which promotes independence in learning and pupils value and enjoy the opportunities offered.

The school carefully assesses pupils' standards and progress at regular intervals. The analysis of this information is rigorous and informs whole-school planning as well as promoting the best possible progress for each individual.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is under review with the aim of improving the basic skills of all pupils. This is entirely appropriate given their low starting points. Lower attaining pupils already receive excellent provision to improve their literacy skills. All the requirements of the National Curriculum are met.

In Key Stage 4, continuing improvements mean that the curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of pupils exceptionally well. There are three curriculum pathways ensuring the availability of a rigorous core of GCSE subjects and a wide choice of vocational courses incorporating Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) certificates, diplomas and National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs). Links with the local college are excellent and provide valuable experiences for many pupils which boost their confidence and personal development.

Work related learning is a strength and careers guidance is excellent. Work experience is well established in Year 10. Whole school days each year focus on business enterprise and a national award was gained in 2006. Pupils appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided including sport, music, art, drama as well as the programme of international visits. A well established Enterprise programme has enabled pupils to achieve considerable success in competitions against other schools at local and regional levels. This shows pupils that they can be just as successful as some schools which are in far more privileged circumstances.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils feel safe because the school takes great care to ensure their well-being. Vulnerable pupils receive outstanding care and support; for example, a supervised 'safe haven' is provided at lunchtime for vulnerable pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are both challenged and encouraged exceptionally well. Where pupils are excluded from the school, usually for fixed periods, it is as a last resort and taken with the interests of all pupils in mind. Pupils' views are sought and valued and they speak very positively about the friendliness and helpfulness of teachers and support staff. Parents are also very appreciative as illustrated by one parent who wrote, 'Both my daughters are very happy here. The headteacher and staff go out of their way to be approachable'.

Monitoring and promoting effective health and safety measures receive high priority and there are reliable systems to assess risks. Pupils' economic well-being is enhanced through the employment skills they develop during work experience and the good range of vocational courses offered. Academic monitoring and mentoring are good. Targets are used and reviewed regularly, so most pupils understand how they are progressing and how to improve their work. Focused and relevant revision classes and coursework catchup sessions are provided in Years 10 and 11 to help raise standards.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher and senior leadership team have a shared vision for the school. They provide outstanding leadership which is clearly focused on raising standards and promoting the personal development and well being of pupils. Leadership training has enabled middle managers to support them fully in this task. Very effective consultation means that staff and pupils are all actively engaged in moving the school forward. School improvement planning identifies priorities well and revolves around fulfilling the potential of each and every pupil. The school has made tremendous progress since the last inspection. Monitoring, evaluating and managing the quality of teaching and learning and of pupils' progress are excellent. Staff make good use of data to inform planning. It is because most pupils understand what they must do to improve that they comfortably beat their 2006 targets both at Key Stage 3 and at GCSE. The school makes very good use of outside agencies. Greater stability in staffing is having a

positive effect upon improving the quality of education. Governors know the school well and fully understand its strengths and weaknesses. They are very effective critical friends and are justifiably proud of the progress being made. Links with parents are very good. As one parent typically said: 'I am extremely happy with KES. If there are problems they are dealt with straight away.' Changes to the menu and improvements to the restaurant facilities have encouraged pupils to eat healthily at break and lunchtimes.

Finances are very well managed and the school has made great improvements to resources, particularly in information and communication technology and school catering. The school gives outstanding value for money.

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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?	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
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?	1

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?	1
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	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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 your great courtesy and maturity during the recent inspection of your school. All the inspectors are very grateful for your kind welcome and great helpfulness during the days we were with you.

We think King Ethelbert is a marvellous school. So many things about it are inspiring and we know you feel proud to be a part of it. The best things are:

- The school cares for you outstandingly well and this helps you to mature as responsible and sensitive young people.
- Teaching is extremely good and, as a result, you achieve well. Standards right across the school are going up rapidly.
- The choice of subjects and courses in Years 9 to 11 is excellent.
- The way the school is led and managed ensures you get the best of everything.

Even in the best schools, there are aspects that can be improved. Your school should concentrate on:

- Improving your standards in English and mathematics.
- Making sure that every pupil has enough information on how to improve their work, in all subjects.

Once again, many thanks for your help during the inspection,