

Kings Norton Girls' School and Language College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103561
Inspection number	308358
Inspection date	28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Ian Hodgkinson

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

Type of school	Academy
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	748
6th form	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Chris Parsons
Headteacher	Patricia Beanland
Date of previous school inspection	18 October 2004
School address	Selly Oak Road Birmingham B30 1HW
Telephone number	0121 675 1305
Fax number	0121 675 2514

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the attainment and progress of and quality of provision for students in the sixth form, the effectiveness of the school's strategies for sustaining high performance, and the quality and effectiveness of the curriculum. Evidence was gathered through discussion with school senior leaders, subject leaders, achievement co-ordinators and managers, the head of the sports college, the chair of governors and groups of students; together with visits to lessons, scrutiny of students' books and folders, and analysis of school records and planning documents. Parents' questionnaire responses were also analysed. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school draws its students widely from residential districts in the south-west of Birmingham. Located in a relatively affluent area, it also serves areas of considerable social disadvantage. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is broadly average, although the proportion speaking English as an additional language is below average. A low proportion of students have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students' attainment on joining the school in Year 7 is above average. The school became a Specialist Language College in 2001 and added a second specialism when it became a Sports College in 2006. It became a Leading Edge School in 2003. It is involved in a range of partnerships with other schools and colleges locally and internationally, and operates joint sixth form provision with the boys' school nearby.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Year upon year, students at this school attain exceptionally high GCSE grades as a result of the excellent progress they make. This consistently very high level of achievement is driven by the school's excellent leadership and management, which are focused relentlessly on keeping standards high and on finding ways of broadening and enriching the opportunities available for students. The school is given exceptionally clear direction in this regard by the headteacher and senior team. Middle managers, including subject leaders, are fully accountable for performance in their areas and take swift and effective action if there are any signs of weakness.

Leaders and managers at all levels monitor performance regularly and closely by analysing data on student progress, observing lessons, checking students' work, and finding out what students and parents think on specific issues. The school's self-evaluation is therefore highly accurate. Its sharp identification of key areas for improvement leads to excellent plans of action. As a result, the school has strengthened further since its last inspection. This is evident in the marked improvement in students' progress in all subjects across Key Stage 3 and in the greater proportion of higher A and B grades attained by sixth formers at A level. Such a strong track record of improvement, in the context of already high levels of performance, is an indication of the school's excellent capacity to improve further. This is not a school to sit still or rest on its laurels; it is outward looking and innovative. Excellent governance ensures that ambitious new developments bring full benefits and are appropriately resourced.

While the school has very high expectations for the academic performance of its students, examination success is by no means the only focus. The school's core purpose is to 'develop in our students the capacity to succeed in their journey through life'. It succeeds in this and ensures that students' personal development and well-being are excellent. A first-rate curriculum makes sure that students greatly enjoy their lessons and engage fully with their education, so attendance is good and nearly all students leave with five or more GCSEs. Many students take advantage of the wide range of opportunities to get involved in supporting others in the school or wider community by, for example, mentoring younger students or leading activities in local primary schools.

The school's recently acquired specialism in sport has had a very significant effect on promoting a good and rapidly increasing level of participation in sport and physical recreation. Together with a very effective programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education, this has helped students develop a very strong awareness of how to live healthily. Students are courteous and tolerant, and their excellent behaviour and respect for one another help them to feel safe and secure at school. They are exceptionally well prepared for later life.

The students' well-rounded personal development is further supported by the breadth of provision for modern languages and international activities associated with the school's language specialism. Some challenging attainment targets at GCSE in modern language subjects have not yet been achieved, but students develop a very strong understanding of the diversity of languages and cultures, both within the UK and overseas. The recently formed International Society, expertly chaired and organised by students themselves, is a mark of the importance given by the students to the celebration of cultural diversity. One student pointed out that 'many teachers go the extra mile to help us with our studies'. Students do indeed benefit from excellent teaching. Lessons are highly purposeful with very clear objectives, which are well understood by the students. Students are clear about their targets and how the carefully planned

lessons and the work they are set can help them achieve these. Teachers' marking of students' work is generally very helpful in giving students specific advice on how to improve their work. Teachers use resources well to ensure that students are able to learn in a variety of ways, with particularly good use of exemplars to show students how they might approach their work. The school's focus on ensuring that the environment is suitable for learning, by ensuring that students behave well and that rooms are lively and stimulating, has been highly successful in ensuring that students are fully engaged in their studies. However in a minority of lessons, teachers direct students too much in their learning, and do not create enough opportunities for them to solve problems independently or by collaborating with their peers. This constrains the breadth of students' learning and their progress in the sixth form in particular. Students in the sixth form make good progress to attain above average standards, but their achievement could be raised still further by promoting students' independent learning skills more consistently across subjects.

The quality of care, support and guidance for students is outstanding. All requirements for safeguarding the safety and well-being of students are met. Students' academic progress is monitored and checked with exceptional care, so that any student who shows signs of underachieving is quickly identified and support put in place. Very strong support systems have been developed to ensure that no student 'slips through the net', with personal achievement managers in all years charged with monitoring and supporting students' progress and liaising with other staff on their behalf. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive high quality support and make excellent progress to meet their targets.

The school works tirelessly to develop partnerships with other agencies, schools and colleges to support its students and enrich opportunities for their learning. Much work is carried on outside of lessons and indeed out of school hours to give students additional help or to take extra subjects that they cannot fit in during the school day. Consequently, all groups of students, across the ability range and across ethnic backgrounds, achieve exceptionally well. Little wonder, then, that the school is held in such high regard by parents, many of whom wrote to tell inspectors how their daughters had 'flourished' and 'blossomed' in their time in the school. The widely held view that 'KNGS has done my daughter proud' concurs well with the inspection judgements for this outstanding school.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

This is a good sixth form. It offers a broad choice of A and AS level courses, and its partnership arrangements offer the flexibility to enable most students to follow their preferred courses. At present, access to vocational options is limited, although the school is well on the way to strengthening this aspect of its curriculum. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average, which does not directly reflect the school's GCSE standards, because some girls go to other schools or colleges on finishing Year 11, while some students join from other schools. Students follow full and challenging programmes of study and leave with above average A-level results. They make good progress. Some variation in rates of progress between subjects reflects some variations in the quality of teaching and learning.

The excellent features of teaching in the rest of the school are often evident in the sixth form, and teachers frequently challenge sixth formers' thinking with some very searching questions. However, in some lessons students are not given enough opportunities to develop their skills for learning and solving problems independently. There is also more variation in the quality of marking in showing students how to improve at this level. Nonetheless, students benefit from

very rigorous monitoring of their progress and rapid intervention to support them if their progress slows. Very high retention rates on courses, with few drop-outs or changes, are testament to the excellent advice, guidance and support that students receive. There is, however, a lack of effective formal structures to allow the student body to articulate their views and concerns. Students' excellent personal development is supported by the leading role they play in supporting younger students and working in the wider community.

Leadership of the sixth form is good. Its very clear recognition of how provision can be further improved, together with a strong track record of improvement since the last inspection, confirms an excellent capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the independent learning skills of sixth form students are developed consistently well across subjects.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	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	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

29 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Kings Norton Girls' School and Language College, Birmingham B30 1HW

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to me and my colleague when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We very much enjoyed talking to you, and seeing you working and taking part in the many activities on offer to you. It was really good to see so many of you having the confidence to take a leading role in activities like the International Society or working with younger students. This is a strong sign of your excellent personal development. You clearly enjoy school a great deal, and value what it has to offer. The school takes very good care of your welfare, and helps you feel safe.

You attend an excellent school, which has a good sixth form. Your GCSE results are consistently exceptionally high, as a result of the excellent progress you make. The school benefits from outstanding leadership and management which keeps a very close check on the quality of education you receive, and which is constantly looking for new ways to widen the opportunities available to you. The school's acquisition of sports college status, for example, has encouraged many more of you to participate in physical activity and supported your very good awareness of how to live healthily. The teaching you receive is excellent. Your lessons are very purposeful, and your teachers give you clear guidance about how to improve. They, together with your tutors and your personal achievement managers, keep a very close check on your progress and offer excellent support to those who need it. Consequently, all groups of students make strong progress.

The inspection report points to one way in which this already very high performing school can get even better. Students in the sixth form make good progress, and their standards are above average. However that progress could be further improved if all subjects consistently offered good opportunities to help students learn independently, without too much teacher direction.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson Lead inspector