

The King's School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110898
Local Authority	CITY OF PETERBOROUGH LA
Inspection number	310459
Inspection date	22 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Kenneth Thomas

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	968
6th form	343
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Helen Bath
Headteacher	Mr Gary Longman
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2003
School address	Park Road Peterborough PE1 2UE
Telephone number	01733751541
Fax number	01733751542

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: target setting and the monitoring of pupils' progress, with particular reference to science; pupils' personal development and the quality of care, support and guidance that supports it; provision for pupils with particular learning needs; the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning; and the overall effectiveness of the sixth form. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons, pupils' work and parents' questionnaires, analysis of extensive school documentation including its self-evaluation, interviews with staff, pupils and the chair of governors. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but the inspectors found no reason 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 King's School is a Voluntary Aided Church of England school located close to the centre of Peterborough. It is similar in size to most other secondary schools, although the sixth form is larger. The school is heavily oversubscribed. Pupils come from over 50 primary schools, within the City and from a wider geographical area. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds and the great majority has English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. Pupils' backgrounds vary but overall are advantaged compared with the national profile. Two hundred and twenty six pupils are registered with the National Academy of Gifted and Talented Youth. The school has been a specialist science college since September 2004 and has recently obtained National Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school provides an outstanding quality of education for its pupils and gives excellent value for money. The school works exceptionally well with other schools, agencies and with the community to enrich pupils' education and ensure their well-being. Parents strongly agree. One captured the views of many by writing, 'there is a mutually supportive partnership between home, school and students. We couldn't ask for more'.

Pupils enter the school with attainment that, although covering a reasonably wide range, is well above average. Because the school sets and achieves very challenging targets, pupils make excellent progress and standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 have been maintained at an outstanding level since the last inspection. In 2007, the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades at A* to C, including English and mathematics, was exceptionally high in relation to the national average. However, achievement overall in science was not as good as in English and mathematics, and the 2007 specialist science targets were not met. Inspection evidence indicates that improved management of science and revised pupil grouping arrangements are now having a positive effect on students' progress. This is now comparable with the progress they make in other subjects. Virtually all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, obtain five or more higher GCSE grades.

Teaching and learning are good, and often outstanding. The school has developed a consistent approach to planning and structuring lessons and this approach, together with the effective use of electronic whiteboards, is having a positive impact on the quality of lessons. Pupils make such good progress because they have a thirst for learning and demonstrate real enjoyment in school. They thrive when lesson activities are challenging and allow them to take responsibility for their own learning. The school has strengthened procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and this information is used well to track their progress. However, there is too much variation in the quality of teachers' marking. In science, for example, marking does not provide clear enough guidance on the standard of the work and in other instances, marking does not let pupils know what they must do to improve.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding because the school's expectations of them are very clear and consistent. Pupils learn in a supportive and inclusive environment where they feel safe and valued as individuals. Pupils are proud of the school and its long traditions and enjoy taking part in all the activities it has to offer. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. Pupils feel safe and say that bullying is rare. They are confident that any instances would be dealt with effectively. Attendance is excellent. Pupils have a proper regard for safety and a good awareness of risks to their personal health and well-being. High levels of participation in physical activity and a clear knowledge of healthy foods enables students to develop a strong sense of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils respond extremely well to the numerous opportunities to take responsibility and make outstanding contributions to the community; they have an impressive understanding of different cultures. Their preparation for later economic well-being is excellent because they have such well developed skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology as well as in their personal qualities.

Pupils' personal development is supported by excellent care, support and guidance. This is evident in the very positive relationships that pervade lessons and in innumerable informal exchanges between staff and pupils. Staff demonstrate strongly caring attitudes and pupils

receive excellent personal support and guidance when making option choices. They say that they are able to talk with teachers about any of their concerns. Pupils' progress is closely monitored and the very effective support provided for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensures that their progress is comparable to that of their peers. In response to the questionnaire, several parents commented on the positive impact of the work of the learning support department on their children's progress. The school fully meets statutory requirements for the protection of children and monitors health and safety issues closely.

The curriculum is excellent because it promotes achievement exceptionally well. The wide range of academic subjects is well suited to the needs of students and the aspirations of parents. Highly effective support ensures that pupils across the attainment range have full and equal access to the curriculum. This contributes to pupils' enjoyment and their positive attitudes to school. Citizenship, enterprise education and work-related learning are effectively covered in a 'Learning for Life' programme. An excellent range of enrichment opportunities in which high numbers of pupils participate complements the curriculum. In addition to residential visits at home and abroad, pupils of all abilities take advantage of the many clubs and other activities offered. Particularly high standards are achieved in the numerous music and sporting activities. These activities make an important contribution to pupils' personal development.

The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, senior staff and governors, is characterised by a very clear vision for the school based on continuous improvement and high achievement for all, within a Christian framework. Pupils are educated in an environment based upon clear values and principles, which influence every aspect of school life, so that pupils feel secure, valued and respected. The school actively promotes a learning culture that successfully motivates and inspires pupils and staff. This creates excellent conditions for learning and makes a significant contribution to pupils' high achievement. Governors hold the school to account very effectively and know its strengths and areas where improvement is needed. The school has tackled the key issues raised at the last inspection effectively. Teaching and learning have been strengthened by more systematic monitoring and evaluation, and more effective use is made of assessment information to monitor pupils' progress. The school has an excellent capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Effectiveness and efficiency of this rapidly expanding sixth form are good. Because students are set realistic but challenging targets their achievement is good and they gain above average results. However, students' progress compared with their prior attainment was not quite as good in the last two years as in previous years. The school has identified weaknesses in monitoring students' progress, arising from the sharp increase in the number of students entering Year 12 from other schools, as a contributory factor. Consequently, changes have been made to the management arrangements to ensure that students' progress is carefully monitored and additional support provided when necessary. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and good lesson planning underpin good teaching and learning. Students are appreciative of their teachers' expertise and display maturity in their learning. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students are well cared for, guided and advised in making choices for the future. Students who enter the school at the start of Year 12 say that they are well supported and made to feel at home very quickly. The essentially academic curriculum is well suited to students' needs and aspirations. Virtually all students complete their courses and are able to pursue the higher education courses or career options of their choice. The school is successful in meeting the needs of the small number of sixth form students with learning difficulties

and/or disabilities, who consequently make good progress. The personal development of students is outstanding. They serve as excellent role models, display maturity in their behaviour and act very responsibly towards younger members of the school. Sixth form students make a significant contribution to the caring ethos of the school. The sixth form provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure greater consistency in teachers' marking so that in all subjects, and particularly in science, pupils are provided with clear guidance on the standard of their work and how to improve.
- In line with existing plans, ensure that the new sixth form management arrangements provide students with closer monitoring and academic support.

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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	2
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	2

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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	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?	2	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	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?	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	2
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	2
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

23 November 2007

Dear Pupils and Students

Inspection of The King's School, Peterborough, PE1 2UE

As you know, your school was recently inspected and this letter is to tell you about the results of the inspection. However, first, I would like to thank you all, on behalf of the inspection team, for your politeness and cooperation during our visit. We greatly appreciated your comments and opinions and were very impressed with your enthusiasm and excellent attitudes to school.

Your school is giving you an outstanding education. This is seen in the exceptionally high standards that you reach and the outstanding progress that you make through the school. Your excellent behaviour in lessons is a considerable help to your teachers because it enables them to concentrate on helping you to learn. This is one of the reasons why you make such outstanding progress from the time you join the school. There is a really friendly and positive atmosphere in the school and relationships between yourselves and the staff are excellent. The curriculum is excellent and is enriched by the exceptionally wide range of visits and after school activities that broaden your experiences. You know that staff care about you and work very hard for you. One of the ways in which teachers help you is by spending a lot of time marking your work. We have asked them to give you more guidance, in their marking, on the standards of your work and the things that you need to do to make your work better.

Those of you in the sixth form are making good progress and standards are above average. You are excellent role models to the rest of the school and set a superb example in helping others. The range of courses is well suited to your needs and interests and you are given good support and guidance. We have asked the school to ensure that you continue to have such good support and guidance as the number of students in the sixth form increases.

We were very pleased to see that so many of you are keen to make the most of the opportunities the school is providing for you. We wish you continued success in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Dr K C Thomas

Lead inspector