

# Kirkby Stephen Grammar School Sports College

## Inspection report

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|                                |                 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 112433          |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Cumbria         |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 310892          |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 4 December 2007 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | David Moore HMI |

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

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|---|---|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Secondary   |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 11–18   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed   |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |   |
| School                                    | 395   |
| 6th form                                  | 74  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                                      |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Mrs Janet Hartley                                       |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr David Keetley  |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 1 January 2004  |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Christian Head<br>Kirkby Stephen<br>Cumbria<br>CA17 4HA |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01768 371693  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01768 372387  |

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## Introduction

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

The overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues were investigated: academic achievement, personal development, the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of care, guidance and support, as well as leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation document, national published assessment data, the school's records and procedures, parents' questionnaires, observation of the school at work and discussions with staff and pupils. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector 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

Kirkby Stephen Grammar School Sports College is situated in the upper Eden Valley of Cumbria. It is much smaller than most other secondary schools. Students come from a wide rural area, covering some 400 square miles. Although free school meal uptake is below that found nationally, the number of students eligible to receive them has risen by 3% since the last inspection. Most students are of White British backgrounds and there are no students for whom English is their second language. At entry students' attainment is broadly average.

The school was built in the 1950s with later additions. The school achieved the School Curriculum Award in 2000, the School Achievement Award in 2001 and 2002 and a Healthy School Award in 2003 and 2007. The school was awarded Sports College Status in September 2003 and also has extended school provision.

As a result of Sport College Status, the school has taken on the Schools Sport Partnership for the whole of the Eden Valley, become an adult education centre and an extended school. It is also a community centre with a wide range of activities and functions for the local community.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

The quality of education provided by Kirkby Stephen Grammar School Sports College is outstanding. At its centre is a belief that all students can succeed given appropriate support. The introduction of sports college specialist status has broadened the curriculum, engaged students and led to overall improvements in standards and achievement; not just in physical education (PE) but across subjects. The progress made by students in their time at the school is outstanding.

Standards achieved at the end of Key Stage 3 are particularly good and above the national averages in English, mathematics and science for both boys and girls. Achievement and standards at the end of Key Stage 4 at GCSE are fractionally below the national average, but in relationship to students' starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 3 they are good. In the sixth form, standards achieved are outstanding.

Students clearly articulate their enjoyment of school and attendance is outstanding. Their voice is taken seriously and they are involved at all levels in discussions about future developments. Through sports college initiatives they are also involved in leadership training and assist staff in running activities for others, including younger children from other local schools. Students are clear that the school is a safe place to be and where everyone knows each other. Participation in the wide range of activities offered as a result of sports college status is significant. Students' speak proudly of their involvements. For example, 20 students from the school have represented the county, England or Great Britain in various sports. Others are involved within community activities and through these opportunities develop a wide range of social skills that positively influence how they behave in school. Relationships between students and adults are outstanding. Students are very clear about the expectations teachers have for them. They are aware of the large amounts of time staff give them, for example running clubs and activities and feel adults are always approachable. As one student said, 'Staff here know you and want you to do your best and they keep an eye on you and if you don't do well they help you get back on track'. Behaviour in and around the school and in lessons is excellent.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They are helped, through the curriculum and additional activities, to understand the nature of a racially and religiously diverse world. For example, enrichment activities and opportunities to explore subjects such as dance widen students' understanding of the world in which they live. Boys in Year 9 in particular have gained a great deal of self-worth and esteem by the opportunities that dance has offered them.

Teaching and learning is good overall with some that is outstanding. Teachers are diligent in planning lessons and, as a result, positively promote good attitudes to learning. The best teaching is exciting, drawing students in and motivating them to do well, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Students understand the targets they have been set and receive clear guidance through marking and discussion on how to improve their work. Teachers are clear about what they expect from students and this has raised students' expectations of themselves. The quality of teaching is responsible for the improvements in progress students make as they move through the school.

A particularly good example of teaching was seen in a Year 11 history lesson. In this lesson the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject was grasped by the students who then went on to write clear judgements about public health in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Students are taught in a variety of styles and are able to work in large groups, pairs and as whole classes. All lessons seen had good pace and challenge with appropriate support. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive particularly good support from the special needs team and class teachers. As a result, they make good progress.

The introduction of sports college status has broadened the range of the curriculum. The school works in partnership with others well to offer a good range of vocational and other certificated courses. Subjects such as drama, dance, art, music and PE have also benefited from sports college status. Students undertake work experience and receive good advice on careers and further and higher education. This prepares them for life beyond school. The school's extensive links with its wider community and parents enable it to be able to tailor specific provision in order to meet the needs of students at risk of disaffection well.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the school is impressive. The school is right to judge itself as outstanding in this area. Considerable efforts are taken to ensure all students' needs are met. Academic mentoring is seen by students as important and they are allowed a voice in who supports them. Similarly students appreciate the support a large number of staff offer to help them catch up on coursework either in the formal coursework club or by making their teaching areas available during lunchtime and after school. Child protection procedures are robust. The self-esteem of students, including those who are vulnerable, is developed well through the many and varied activities available. Strong and supportive links with primary schools ensure transition to the school is managed well. Students spoke appreciatively of how they were supported when they first joined the school. The school works closely with parents and carers who for the most part feel their children receive a good academic and social experience at Kirkby Stephen.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides quiet, clear and strong leadership by involving others. With the governing body, staff and bursar he has successfully reduced an inherited financial deficit without compromising teaching and learning. The director of sport, along with enthusiastic staff and the senior leadership team, has ensured that the school, through the sports college status, has taken the opportunity to broaden the curriculum and give students greater opportunity to develop leadership skills. The overall quality of subject leadership is good, though there is a need to formally strengthen middle managers' monitoring roles. Governance is good. They are well informed about the work of the school and monitor its work effectively. They have ensured that all statutory policies and additional policies are in place and reviewed regularly. The school is able to demonstrate it has outstanding capacity to improve by the way it has exploited the opportunities of being a sports college, by raising standards in all key stages and the sixth form and in working to reduce the budget deficit.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Standards are significantly above average in the sixth form. The point scores achieved across a range of subjects by students is outstanding with high Advanced Level point scores across a range of subjects. The numbers in the sixth form are small, but all students participate in the life of the whole school offering clear guidance and support to younger students and acting as role models. Teaching offered to students is outstanding and they are challenged appropriately and taught the skills necessary to learn independently. Students take great pride in being members of the school and are fulsome in their praise for the care, guidance and support they receive from all staff. The management of the sixth form is outstanding. The head of sixth form has a clear view of individuals' progress. Liaison with subject teachers is efficient and concerns

about students followed up effectively. As a result, students stay on task and enjoy their experience in the sixth form and the opportunities the extensive curriculum for such a small school offers.

**What the school should do to improve further**

- Develop the skills of middle managers particularly in formal monitoring and evaluation of students' progress.



## 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 |
|---|----------------|-------|

### 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 | 1 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 | 1 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 1 | 1 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 | 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                                     | 2 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 1 | 1 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 1 | 1 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 1 | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 | 1 |
| The behaviour of learners   | 1 | 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 | 2 | 2 |

### The quality of provision

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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |     |
|--|-----|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 1   | 1   |
| How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education | 1   | 1   |
| How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards  | 1   | 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   | 1   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   | 2   |
| 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

5 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Kirkby Stephen Grammar School Sports College, Cumbria,

CA17 4HA

I am writing to thank you for your cooperation during the inspection of the school. I had the good fortune to be able to speak with a number of you either formally as part of a group, such as the school council, those involved with the gifted and talented programme, those receiving learning support or others less formally in and around the school and in the dining room. Your openness and honesty in discussions assisted me greatly in understanding the school and how you are able to make your voice heard. In formal meetings I promised to inform you of the inspection findings, hence this letter.

The school was judged to be outstanding. For a small school it provides a very wide range of activities for you to participate in and I know from discussion how much many of you appreciate the time given by staff that run them. I was particularly impressed, and it will be mentioned in the report, with how many of you have taken junior leadership courses and are able to assist in the running of activities. It is clear that the gaining of sports college status has made a difference over the last four years. Sixth formers I spoke with were clear about how the school had improved in terms of examination results and also with regard to the range of subjects and activities available.

The standards that you achieve as you move through the school are impressive. This is due to the good and in some cases outstanding teaching that takes place and your willingness to participate. I saw some outstanding lessons in history with Year 11 and a memorable dance lesson with Year 9 boys where their ability to interpret what the teacher was asking them to do and turn it into a sequence of dance moves was exciting to see. The work undertaken by A-level sixth form students in art was of a very high standard and it was clear how well they had developed those skills from Year 7 onwards.

It was also clear from discussions I had, that most students felt well supported by the school, understood their targets and knew how to improve their work. Similarly, students commented favourably on homework and coursework clubs and the opportunity to be linked to a mentor in Key Stage 4.

Your attendance is outstanding. Behaviour around the school and in lessons during the inspection was also outstanding, particularly considering that the weather was not at all good. From discussion it was clear that most people felt safe in school and the care, guidance and support offered by the school was judged to be outstanding. The atmosphere of the school is very positive and reflects well how you get on as a small community.

It is a long time since I have been in such a small school where people travelled considerable distances to attend and was impressed at how much the school was used by you all after the end of the formal school day and during holiday times.

Please accept my thanks for making my visit interesting and enjoyable. You will see that there is one main recommendation that subject leaders and key stage coordinators need to formalise their monitoring of progress and teaching.

May I take this opportunity to wish you every success in your future studies and hope you enjoy the rest of your time at this remarkable school.

Yours sincerely

David Moore HMI

**Annex B**