

Kings Langley School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117526
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312643
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2007
Reporting inspector	David Jones HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1068
6th form	167
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs F Stickley
Headteacher	Mr G Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	1 December 2003
School address	Love Lane Kings Langley Hertfordshire WD4 9HN
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Larger than average, the school contributes to a local sixth form partnership in Hemel Hempstead. The proportion of girls and boys in each year group varies annually. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those who are learning English as an additional language is below average. The area displays a normal range of social and economic characteristics. Attainment on entry is just above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or with a statement of special educational need is below average but rising. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is average. The school has been awarded the Sports Mark and Investors in People status. Applications for Arts Mark status and specialist school status in the Arts are pending the decision of the awarding bodies.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The quality of education is satisfactory with a number of good features. Leadership and management are effective, having brought about steady improvement in recent years. The school's capacity to improve further is good.

Self-evaluation is accurate and senior staff have a realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses; action has been taken to address those areas in need of development. Senior leaders were invited to observe teaching with HMI; the views they expressed concurred with the judgements given by inspectors. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. A significant number of lessons could have achieved a better grade if the use of questioning and assessment had been more systematic; more needs to be done through monitoring and support to develop the quality of learning.

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. The unvalidated results of the 2007 Key Stage 3 national tests were above both the local authority (LA) and national averages. The steady improvement in GCSE results in recent years has continued. In 2007, the proportion of students who gained five higher grade GCSE that included English and mathematics exceeded the national average for the first time. Results at A level have continued to improve, although still below the national average. Although girls were generally more successful than boys, there was no discernable difference between the progress made by those from different ethnic backgrounds, individuals with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their peers.

Effective steps have been taken to improve the students' personal development through good care and pastoral support. Academic guidance is generally satisfactory although it requires further development in order to improve achievement. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is generally good and attendance is above average. Efforts to secure the students' future economic well-being have been enhanced by good 14-19 curriculum development; the range of extra-curricular opportunities provided is good.

The students are guided towards healthy lifestyles by effective physical education provision and access to good quality school meals. The school has achieved healthy schools status and the Sports Mark. Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school's sixth form is effective. It has grown considerably and the curriculum has developed strongly in the last two years. One particular strength is the organisation into four bands or 'pathways', with good provision for vocational courses. Another is the school's strong partnership with local schools and colleges, which provides students with a very good range of academic and vocational courses. Provision is now cost-effective and the school has made very good progress in tackling the issues raised at the last inspection.

Standards of attainment are improving gradually, but remain below average. In lessons seen, students made good progress and teaching was generally good. Attendance has improved and it is now good. A high proportion of students finish their courses and many go on to university and college.

Students are very pleased with the education they receive. Some say they get useful help in how to improve their work, but others are less sure if they are meeting their targets. This is an

area requiring further development. Students enjoy a wide range of activities. Many are involved in helping younger students, and in charitable activities in the school and community. Guidance for students before they join the sixth form is very good, and students speak warmly of the advice and information they receive before they apply to university, college or work. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the level of individual challenge in the lessons to ensure that greater pupil engagement leads to improvements in learning and standards of achievement.
- Refine the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning to guide the methodological changes required to increase the proportion of good teaching.
- Improve the academic guidance provided to students by class teachers and form tutors.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

The unvalidated outcomes of the 2007 Key Stage 3 national tests were a significant improvement on previous years. The proportion of students reaching the expected levels in English, mathematics and science equalled or exceeded the local authority (LA) average and were above the national figures. The proportion of students attaining the higher levels was below average in English, average in science and above average in mathematics.

Standards at Key Stage 4 have also improved. The percentage of students obtaining five A*–C grades at GCSE is just below the average. However, the proportion who obtained five such higher grades at GCSE that included English and mathematics exceeded the national figure; this was largely due to the improvement in the mathematics results. Good performances were recorded in English and mathematics, English literature, music, physical education and vocational subjects. However, weaknesses were evident in the results from Art & design, history, French and German. However, in a number of subjects there were a limited number of higher-level grades. Most students now make satisfactory progress between Key Stages 2 and 4.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students are happy and enjoy coming to school. As a result, levels of attendance are now above the national average. Positive relationships with peers and adults are fostered through a strongly supportive, harmonious and inclusive culture. Students' attitude to learning is good. One student's comment encapsulates the views of many: 'I like the school because everyone gets on and the staff here are friendly and you can talk to them about any issues.'

Behaviour around the school and in classrooms is good. Although a very small number of parental questionnaires noted concerns about behaviour, the overwhelming majority expressed positive views. The number of exclusions is low. The school has a low tolerance of bullying and

students noted that the few incidents that occur were managed effectively. The 'Resilience' project supports potentially vulnerable students successfully.

Students understand how to ensure their own safety and the importance of developing healthy lifestyles. They take advantage of the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, are willing to take on responsibility and many serve the school and wider community. Peer mentoring, the school council and various charitable activities help students develop an understanding of social interdependence and responsible citizenship. Students' basic and work-related skills, together with their positive careers programme, provide a good base for their future working lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although the school has worked hard to raise the standard of teaching and learning, there is insufficient good teaching to raise achievement above satisfactory. However, there are examples of good and even excellent practice, for example, in a Year 7 information and communication technology (ICT) lesson where the teacher's inspirational delivery enthused and challenged students. The students made outstanding progress.

Teachers manage behaviour well, establish good relationships with their students and create a good learning environment. In response, students have positive attitudes towards their learning, generally apply themselves well and are prepared to take risks. In most lessons, teachers plan lessons effectively, share lesson objectives clearly and make good use of ICT. This enables students to make satisfactory progress. However, on too many occasions, staff missed the opportunity presented to develop learning to the point where students made good or outstanding progress. Some written work is dull and poorly presented and students are given insufficient guidance on how to put this right. Most students know their grades and levels at which they are working, but too few know what they have to do to improve and this is partly because the quality and style of marking is inconsistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum has improved significantly at all levels with further refinements proposed for 2008. The school's application to be a Specialist School in the arts is well advanced. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is arranged as three flexible '14-19 pathways' effectively linked to the sixth form curriculum. Vocational courses for students of all levels of ability are increasing, and new diploma courses have been planned. Links with local colleges and other schools are very good, and the school plays a leading part in the local educational partnership.

The school makes good provision for those who are gifted and talented or who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The personal and social education (PSE) programme gives students valuable guidance, including careers, personal safety and health. The school's positive and friendly atmosphere helps students enjoy their education, and the very good range of activities; sports, visits, extra courses, music and drama, help them enjoy their education and achieve success in a wide range of activities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school cares for students well and this contributes positively to their personal development. Staff understand students' social and emotional needs and create a warm and welcoming atmosphere that promotes self-esteem, confidence and good relationships. Pastoral support is good and there are close links with a range of external agencies. Child protection arrangements and risk assessments are effective and there are good systems in place for safeguarding students.

Academic support and guidance is satisfactory but needs to be developed further. The range of assessment data available is not deployed consistently to guide and monitor student progress. The support for students with learning difficulties and/or difficulties is satisfactory. Students receive good quality advice and guidance about courses at Key Stage 4.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good; the school has made good progress with a number of major areas since the last inspection. Similarly, the school has followed up effectively on the recommendations of the work place reforms survey conducted by HMI in 2006.

Senior managers at all levels have set a clear direction that has led to the promotion of good pastoral care and satisfactory educational provision. Curriculum development within the local partnership is good and the leadership of the sixth form is very good. Middle management is effective with some departments and sections of the school more dynamic than others. Governance is good.

Equality of opportunity is good and students comment that discrimination is tackled effectively. As a result, achievement is satisfactory. Challenging targets have been used effectively to raise standards; further refinements, consistently applied across all departments, are required to hold staff accountable for pupil progress. Resource management is good and the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Financial management is good and the school meets the new financial standards for secondary schools. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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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?	3	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?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
The behaviour of learners	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?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	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?	2	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	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	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	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

7 December 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Kings Langley School, Kings Langley WD4 9HN

It was a great pleasure to visit your school recently and meet so many of you. The inspection team were impressed by the good manners you displayed and the positive personal relationships we saw around the school. As older students will be aware, the school has made significant progress in recent years and we feel you are provided with good curriculum opportunities.

The care and personal support available is good but we feel the school could provide you with better academic guidance so you clearly understand how to improve. In lessons, we noted that many of you have good ideas that relate to the topic under discussion but only some have the confidence to ask your teachers for guidance or offer suggestions. If you can become more involved in the lessons, you will find your learning more rewarding.

As you know, we took a number of opportunities to speak to you during the inspection and one member of Year 10 summed up much of what you said: "I like the school because everyone gets on and the staff here are friendly and you can talk to them about any issues."

To help the school move forward I have asked the headteacher to focus on developing the proportion of very good teaching. Your learning can improve in some subjects and I have asked the school to focus on using questioning, marking and assessment to give you even clearer feedback on your progress.

I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Kings Langley and wish all of you success in the future.

David Jones

Her Majesty's Inspector