

The King's School, Grantham

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	120698
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	313720
Inspection date	21 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	962
6th form	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steven Cousins
Headteacher	Mr Stephen Howarth
Date of previous school inspection	14 March 2005
School address	Brook Street Grantham Lincolnshire NG31 6RP
Telephone number	01476563180
Fax number	01476590953

Age group	11-18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: to confirm the school's view of teaching and learning in the whole school and sixth form; to investigate the quality of the school's care, guidance and support in helping all pupils achieve their potential; to identify how well the leadership and management at all levels help to raise standards and improve achievement; and to assess the accuracy of the school's self-evaluation processes.

Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, achievement data, meetings with students, discussions with key staff from across the school and the school's monitoring documents. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found evidence to support the school's own judgements about its provision and these have been included in the report where appropriate.

Description of the school

The King's School, Grantham is a medium sized selective grammar school for boys aged between 11 and 18. Students are drawn from across south-east Lincolnshire and parts of Nottinghamshire. There are 962 students on roll, of whom 251 are sixth form students. The school population reflects a wide social and economic background but overall, socio-economic indicators are well above average. The school has very low levels of students entitled to free school meals and a well below average proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The majority of students are White British with students of minority ethnic backgrounds making up around 8% of the school population. The school has held specialist college status for business and enterprise since 2003 and is currently awaiting re-designation. It has achieved Artsmark and Sportsmark awards. The school runs its sixth form provision in conjunction with a local secondary school for girls.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The King's School, Grantham is an outstanding school. The school has successfully fostered a culture of respect and high aspirations; as a result, students' attitudes to school and to learning are exemplary. Since the last inspection, significant improvements have been made to the sixth form accommodation, the already high standards achieved in 2005 have continued to rise and the school achieved its best ever examination results in 2007. Subsequently, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Students enter the school with much higher than average levels of attainment and they make very good progress through Years 7 to 9 and excellent progress through Years 10 and 11. The standards reached by students are extremely high. In 2007, overall GCSE results improved further with every student achieving five or more A*-C grades and a very high proportion gaining A* or A grades across most subjects. In a small minority of subjects, however, the progress made by some students was less marked and was generally in line with expectations. The headteacher and senior managers know the school exceptionally well. They are aware of the few areas of relative weakness and are well on their way to addressing them.

The school's specialist status for business and enterprise is used exceptionally well to enable students to achieve high standards and receive an enhanced quality of education. Very challenging specialist subject targets are largely met, and standards in mathematics are exceptionally high. Enterprise skills are well developed across the curriculum to help students to use initiative and personal skills independently. Consequently, students develop the skills to use their abilities to the full by working with a good measure of independence to achieve outstanding results.

Students' personal development is outstanding. They are cheerful, cooperative and responsive to reason. They say that they greatly enjoy school and appreciate how much it helps them to be prepared for future educational and career opportunities. They behave well in class and when they are not directly supervised. Students have a thorough understanding of how to live a healthy lifestyle and to stay safe. They actively participate in lessons and in the extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities available. Many contribute considerably to both school and wider communities, for example through sports coaching or volunteer work. The vast majority of parents also speak highly of the extra curriculum available and are overwhelmingly supportive of the school as a whole. In addition, many note the 'superb enthusiasm' of all staff and the high moral values promoted that help develop their sons into 'well-rounded, fine young people'.

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. It is consistently good and occasionally outstanding, although only a small proportion of the teaching is of this high quality. Teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of course requirements are excellent. Relationships with students are very good, and students respond very well to the challenges presented to them. Teachers are becoming increasingly skilful and confident in drawing on each student's initiative and enthusiasm to enable them to learn and achieve independently. There is a growing understanding that students learn best in different ways, and different learning styles are recognised in the planning of lessons. Consequently, standards are rising and the school gained its best-ever examination results last year. Just occasionally, some lessons are led by the teacher too much and pupils are not actively involved enough in demonstrating their learning. There is a considerable range of assessment data available to enable teachers to match work to the

full range of learners' abilities and teachers are using this with increasing effect to ensure that work matches all students' needs.

Students receive outstanding care, guidance and support. All safeguarding requirements are met. Staff know students well and there is excellent rapport. Students with learning difficulties or social or emotional difficulties are very well supported and all achieve exceptionally well, fully in line with others. Students' academic progress is closely monitored and regularly reviewed. Any academic underperformance is rapidly identified and students receive support from adult mentors to help them reach their academic potential.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher provides strong leadership and is ably supported by a highly competent senior leadership team. There is a whole school commitment to improvement. Governors are actively involved in the school's work and monitor its performance closely. Analysis, self-evaluation and monitoring of performance are well established and meticulous. Where necessary, swift and supportive interventions are put in place. Subject leadership is good overall, although there is some variability. The school has recognised the need to ensure all subject leaders are equally as effective in raising achievement across the school. The school's evaluation of its provision very accurately identified its strengths and areas for improvement, but was overly modest in its judgment on care, guidance and support, which inspectors raised from good to outstanding.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form provision is good. Around 90% of students progress onto the sixth form from the main school. Most make good progress, particularly through Year 13. However, the progress they make varies by subject. The standards reached by students are extremely high. The school gained its highest ever A-level pass rate at 99% in 2007. The proportion of students gaining high grades on A-level courses is well above average. Teaching and learning in the sixth form is good with some excellent features. Sixth form students develop into mature, confident and articulate individuals who act as excellent role models for students in the main school. There is a wide array of opportunities for students to take on additional responsibilities such as sports coaching or voluntary work. Support and guidance is very effective in enabling students to choose careers and to take up the opportunities available in higher education. Virtually all sixth form students move successfully onto their first choice in higher education. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good with an outstanding capacity to improve. Increased monitoring of performance by the sixth form managers is rapidly and effectively identifying priority areas for further support and ironing out any inconsistencies.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning in lessons.
- Ensure all subjects perform equally well across the school.

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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?	2	2
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	1
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	2	
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?	2	2
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

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	2	2
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

22 May 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of The King's School, Grantham, NG31 6RP

I would like to begin by thanking you all for welcoming my colleague and I to your school on the 21 May. Your courtesy, confidence and maturity impressed us from the moment we arrived. During the day we spent at your school we visited your lessons, met with a number of you and talked at length to various members of school staff. This letter aims to outline to you our findings from the day.

We found your main school to be outstanding in nearly all areas. We found your sixth form to be good overall, with some excellent features. Your standards of work are very high and many of you leave with excellent GCSE and A-level grades. You develop a firm understanding of mathematics and English which prepares you well for life after school. Your school has made exceptional use of its specialist status to enhance the quality of your education. We agreed with your school's own view that lessons are good overall and that your personal development and well-being are outstanding. We also found that your school provides a very high quality of guidance and support, which you value. You told us how much you appreciated the new sixth form facilities, the supportive nature of teachers and the growing range of sports available - such as water polo, golf and basketball.

Your headteacher and senior management team are doing a superb job in moving your school forward. We have left the school with two areas to improve further. These are:

- to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning
- to ensure all subject leaders are equally effective in raising student achievement across the school.

You can of course help maintain your school's outstanding status by continuing to work as hard as you can to achieve your best. Also, continue to share your views through your school council. This way, managers will know what you think the school does well or what you think it needs to improve further.

Thank you again for your help in this inspection and we would like to wish you all the very best in your studies and every success in the future.

Deborah Vaughan-Jenkins

Her Majesty's Inspector