

King Charles I Secondary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135060
Local Authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	319607
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1360
Sixth form	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Neal
Headteacher	Tim Gulliver
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hill Grove House Comberton Road Kidderminster DY10 1XA
Telephone number	01562 512880
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a very large school and sixth form. The great majority of students come from White British backgrounds. The school was opened in September 2007, as part of the Wyre Forest reorganisation of education, replacing the former high school and middle schools. The headteacher was appointed in September 2007, following a lengthy period of acting headship in the former 13 to 18 years high school. The senior leadership team, a number of whom are new to the school, were appointed to the school at the same time or shortly afterwards.

The school is based on a split site. Students in Years 7 and 8 are based on the lower site and students in Years 9 to 13 are on the upper site. Since September 2007 the school has made provision for up to 20 students with autism spectrum disorder and severe language challenges in the newly formed Communication Centre, which has a base on both sites. These students also attend some mainstream classes. The former high school was awarded science specialist college status in 2003 and this has continued into the new school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school. It provides a good education in the sixth form. Improvements in most aspects of the school's provision have begun to reverse a steep decline in standards and achievement caused by severe staffing difficulties, especially at senior management level, during the three year lead-in to the opening of the new school. Staffing problems have been successfully resolved and the school now provides students of all abilities with a sound education.

The headteacher and recently appointed senior team provide a clear sense of direction for the school. Planning is sound and based on thorough self-evaluation. Rapid action has been taken to introduce effective systems to promote achievement, such as closer monitoring of students' progress. Weaknesses, for example in teaching, have been addressed successfully in the main. Challenging targets have been used to raise expectations of what students can achieve. Curriculum leadership is satisfactory and occasionally good and curriculum leaders are rapidly acquiring skills in monitoring and evaluation to help them perform their roles more effectively. Governors support the school well, but the level of challenge they provide, whilst satisfactory, is more limited. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The leadership of the sixth form and the specialist college aspects of the school's work are good.

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall and, in an increasing number of lessons, it is good. This is, in part, a result of improved teaching, which is also satisfactory overall but good in a substantial minority of lessons. It is also due to a sound and improving curriculum, which is more closely matched to students' needs, especially in Years 9 to 11.

Standards remain below average. However, they have begun to rise in many curriculum areas, for example modern foreign languages, and are above average in science, reflecting the positive impact of specialist status. In mathematics, standards have risen substantially from their previous low base and are now broadly average in Years 10 and 11, but students still have ground to make up in Years 7 to 9. Standards in English are well below average. Whilst most students now make satisfactory progress, they are not catching up quickly enough. There are early signs of faster progress, with the introduction of new strategies, but there has not been time for their full impact to be felt. Literacy skills are lower than they should be for some students and in a minority of curriculum areas insufficient attention is paid to promoting them. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those in the recently established Communication Centre make satisfactory progress, because provision is effectively organised.

Despite recent improvements, in a small and rapidly decreasing minority of lessons, especially in Years 7 to 9, work set does not match the range of needs and engage the interest of all students. This occasionally results in low-level disruption which slows the pace of learning. This is, rightly, a cause for concern for a number of parents. However, most students enjoy their learning, especially when it presents them with a high level of challenge.

Students' personal development is satisfactory. Students take their considerable responsibilities, such as acting as school council members, seriously. They participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities the school provides, especially in sport, and develop a satisfactory awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle. Activities such as school trips promote students' sound spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students are helped to develop an understanding of the range of faiths and cultures in contemporary Britain and the school's contribution to community cohesion is satisfactory.

Parents appreciate the good pastoral care provided for their children, often in productive partnerships with others. Robust action has raised levels of students' attendance, which are now above average. A behaviour policy which places a stronger emphasis on rewards is leading to improvements in students' behaviour. Parents particularly appreciate postcards to celebrate their children's achievements. Effective procedures are in place to ensure students are healthy and safe. Academic guidance is satisfactory overall. Whilst there is good practice in some curriculum areas, in others students do not understand their targets, and feedback from teachers does not explain the steps they need to take to reach them.

Through the advances the school has made, it has demonstrated that its capacity to improve is satisfactory.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Students achieve well in the sixth form and the standards they reach are above average. Students have good attitudes to work and show a high level of determination to do well. They take an active part in a wide range of activities and several act as mentors to younger students. Students have a high regard for the very good quality of guidance and personal support they receive, and appreciate the availability of computers and study space. They have a good grasp of their targets, how well they are doing and the steps they need to take to reach their challenging grades. External support from careers advisers, university tutors and employers provides a good range of further guidance to help students. Teaching is good, and in a small minority of lessons, excellent. Most lessons are challenging and well matched to students' needs. However, occasionally opportunities are missed to engage students in discussing their work. The curriculum is good and improving rapidly through the work of a local consortium, which provides an increasing range of academic, vocational and work-related courses to meet students' needs. The sixth form is well led and managed. Better monitoring and evaluation are informing the planning of further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help students to reach their challenging targets, particularly in English and in mathematics in Years 7 to 9, by making sure that work consistently matches their needs and that staff give them clear guidance on how to improve their work.
- Ensure that planning in all curriculum areas assists students to improve their literacy skills. 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

Standards are below average, especially in English, reflecting a legacy of considerable underachievement. Achievement for all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is now satisfactory, and sometimes better. In spite of recent improvements, there is still a gap between students' targets and the standards they reach in mathematics in Years 7 to 9. Literacy skills are underdeveloped and some students, of all abilities, have a narrow vocabulary range and find it difficult to explain and justify their views. Students make the most progress in science, art, physical education, religious education, German and information and communication technology. There have been significant improvements in modern foreign

languages, where achievement is now satisfactory. As a result of staffing difficulties, standards in some technology subjects remain well below targets. Students attending the Communication Centre make satisfactory and, occasionally, good progress when in the centre, but more limited progress when in some mainstream classes.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most students behave well, have positive attitudes to learning and attend regularly. A small minority, however, occasionally arrive late to lessons. Students feel safe; younger students spoke of some bullying, but felt it was dealt with effectively when reported. Students appreciate the benefits of healthy eating, but this is not always reflected in their eating habits at school. They make a good contribution to the school and wider community, for example making decisions and taking responsibility for themselves and others through the year and house systems. Students based in the Communication Centre make good progress with the development of their social skills because their difficulties are assessed well and interventions are effective. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Students participate in serious topical and spiritual debates in religious education, but opportunities are more limited elsewhere in school. Students' satisfactory social skills, sound progress in their academic studies and the good advice and guidance they receive prepare them adequately for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

There have been recent improvements in the quality of teaching especially in mathematics and modern foreign languages. Most lessons now have clear learning objectives, so that students understand what they are trying to achieve. Relationships with teachers are cordial, motivating students to learn. Interactive whiteboards are increasingly used to add variety and interest to lessons. In the increasing number of good or better lessons, for example in religious education, art and science, work is well planned and successfully challenges and engages the interest of all students. In a small minority of lessons, however, the pace of learning is slow, the work set does not meet the full range of students' needs and the content is pedestrian. In these lessons a small number of students either quietly 'switch off' or cause low-level disruption. In a number of lessons teaching does not meet students' specific literacy needs, for example by extending the quality of their responses through skilful questioning. Students based in the Communication Centre are supported soundly by specialist staff. The quality of teaching they receive in mainstream school, whilst satisfactory, is more varied. It is least effective when teachers lack the expertise to match the work set closely to their needs. Marking is satisfactory overall, but too often does not provide clear guidance to students on how to improve their work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced and meets the needs of most students satisfactorily. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is improving rapidly and is contributing to rising standards. Specialist status has enabled the school to introduce innovative courses in science which motivate students to learn. Specific interventions are helping groups of students to make up lost ground. Curriculum choice has been widened through effective partnerships

which are enabling the school to provide courses, for example one leading to a diploma in construction, that are more closely matched to students' aspirations and interests. This has had a positive effect on raising standards and re-engaging disaffected students in learning. Increased provision for literacy in Years 7 and 8 and a pilot programme of study support for older students are beginning to improve students' literacy skills and develop their confidence, but insufficient attention is paid to this in some lessons. Support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is satisfactory. Students appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular provision, especially in sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides good pastoral care for all learners, but especially for those who are particularly vulnerable. Provision is enhanced by a good range of effective external links, for example with a multi-agency group, which has enabled the school to improve attendance and provide managed moves for some students at risk of exclusion. The impact of the work of recently appointed pastoral managers and an improved behaviour system have had a positive effect on students' attitudes and behaviour. Close links with parents promote the achievement of students in the Communication Centre. Procedures to ensure students' health and safety operate effectively. Academic guidance is satisfactory. In some areas, such as science and vocational subjects, students receive good guidance on the progress they are making and how to improve their work. However, there is significant variation between areas and many students do not understand their targets and are unclear about the steps they need to take to reach them.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior team provide strong leadership for the school. Self-evaluation demonstrates a clear awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but is occasionally over-generous. Determined and timely action has led to improvements in teaching, the curriculum, the monitoring of students' progress, academic guidance and the leadership skills of middle managers, which are now satisfactory and occasionally good. This is beginning to improve students' standards and achievement, and behaviour, although much work remains to be done. Attendance has risen and is now good. Good use has been made of the resources and expertise brought by science specialist college status, for example through the deployment of lead teachers to support school staff. Governors provide good support, but more limited challenge to the school. Leadership of the Communication Centre is satisfactory and enables students to make sound progress.

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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	NA	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	2
The attendance of learners	3	2
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
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 eliminated	3	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	
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	3	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

23 January 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of King Charles 1 School, Kidderminster, DY10 1XA

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. Some of your parents replied to our questionnaire, so please thank them. You will be pleased to know that provision in the sixth form is good and students achieve well, reaching above average standards. You all know that there have been a lot of changes over the last few years. Because of these changes, you have not done as well in Years 7 to 11 as you should have and standards are below average. Your headteacher, senior team and staff are working hard to improve this as quickly as possible. Because of their efforts, the school provides you with a satisfactory education, which is improving quickly.

Most of you enjoy your learning, work hard and feel safe. Attendance is above average, so keep it up! Your positive approaches to work are helping you to make satisfactory and often better progress in your learning and you are beginning to catch up on the work you missed. However, you still have more catching up to do, so keep up the efforts! Most of you arrive punctually for lessons, so well done, but a few students arrive late. You take on a number of significant responsibilities, and that benefits everyone in school and often in the wider community. The staff now have a much clearer view of how well you are doing and this is helping them to improve teaching. As a result, your work gets better faster.

- In order to improve things further we have asked the school to:
- help you to reach your targets, especially in English and mathematics, by making sure that tasks are at the right level for you and that staff give you clear guidance on how to improve your work
- give you opportunities to develop your skills in speaking, reading, listening and writing.

We hope you continue to enjoy your education.

Best wishes

Marion Thompson

Lead inspector