

# Kenton School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	108528
<b>Local Authority</b>	Newcastle upon Tyne
<b>Inspection number</b>	324790
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Andrew Johnson HMI

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

---

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	2108
Sixth form	407
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Cllr Margaret Carter
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr David Pearmain
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Drayton Road Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE3 3RU
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 2142200
<b>Fax number</b>	0191 2142208

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–19
<b>Inspection dates</b>	10–11 February 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	324790

---

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Kenton is one of the largest schools in England situated near the city centre of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. It is a community school that holds dual arts and technology specialist status. Students transfer from primary schools in many parts of the city and the school is oversubscribed every year. The number of students in the sixth form has increased significantly in recent years. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds; however most are from areas that are significantly deprived. A higher than average proportion is entitled to free school meals. The school moved into new purpose-built premises in November 2008. It is an extended school that is used by 3,000 adult learners and provision beyond the timetable is extensive. Nearly all students have English as their first language and few are from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are more boys than girls in each year group. The number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The school hosts a unit for students with communication and speech difficulties. It has won several national awards including the Sportsmark, Artsmark Gold and Healthy schools award.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where students' personal development is excellent. Their academic achievement is good and often exceptional. There are many reasons why the school is so successful, including the outstanding curriculum, the highly effective support students receive and the drive and ambition of the leadership team. The excellent relationship between staff and students leads to an environment of high expectation and mutual trust. One student expressed a view that was typical of many by saying: teachers are 'amazing' and are always on hand to provide help, support, and advice.

Students enjoy many aspects of school life. For example, inspectors saw students waiting in great anticipation outside the learning resource centre. They were excited by the prospect of using the exercise, dance, drama and art facilities. Their enthusiasm for learning is harnessed by teachers and results in good achievement in many subjects. The new building provides a fantastic range of first-rate resources and means that subjects such as hairdressing, manufacturing technology and ceramics can be taught in realistic working environments.

Students enter the school with below average attainment in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science; many also have below average verbal communication skills. A large number of students have a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has focused its attention on improving standards and has been very successful. In 2008, 85% of students gained five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE and many were successful in achieving vocational qualifications. Science results are excellent. In Key Stage 3, students make good progress in mathematics, however, in English and science progress is slower. In Key Stage 4, students make good progress in English and science, however in mathematics progress is slower. The school has identified improvement in the core subjects as a key priority. Teacher assessment so far this year shows significant improvement in outcomes in both key stages. School data indicate the lower proportion of students who achieve both English and mathematics qualifications will increase significantly in 2010.

The school is well aware of its place in the local community and has identified the barriers to learning students face. As a result they have devised an outstanding curriculum that matches the aptitudes and needs of students. The school clearly demonstrates that its educational impact is enhancing the economic well-being of the community it serves. Parents are overwhelmingly positive in the comments they make about the support their children receive. Students frequently take part in voluntary and charitable activities, such as hairdressing students offering a service to senior citizens. They are well aware that they live in a multi-cultural city and celebrate diversity. Students explain very clearly why the school motto 'all different, all equal' is important to them and how it is translated into action. International awareness is particularly well developed in the sixth form through the activities in which they are involved in Costa Rica, Tanzania and India.

Most lessons are good and many are outstanding, with a small proportion that is satisfactory. Teachers work hard to engage and motivate students; this usually results in mature and business-like behaviour in lessons. Parents and students receive very effective guidance about what progress they are making. Marking is carried out frequently, although there is some inconsistency in the way in which teachers approach the correction of students' literacy and numeracy work.

The leadership of the headteacher and senior management team is outstanding. The impact of the work of middle managers has improved since the last inspection. Managers are now very clearly focused upon the key challenges the school faces and have grown in confidence and effectiveness. The move to the new building was delayed and provided significant potential risks to students' education. However, this process was managed very efficiently and disruption kept to a minimum. Despite the large size of the school it maintains a family atmosphere with a clear focus on treating every student as an individual. For example, the headteacher and senior staff have a detailed knowledge of vulnerable students and the challenges they face.

Since the last inspection, actions taken to improve the school have been effective. For example, attendance has improved significantly due to the effective measures taken to reduce the stubborn absenteeism of a minority of students. Strategies to minimise the impact of the poor behaviour of a very small minority of students have been highly effective and exclusion rates have been reduced. Governors make an excellent contribution to the leadership of the school because they provide a useful bridge with the local community. Governors support and enhance the appointment process and recognise the importance of building an effective senior team. Governors challenge senior leaders and have very high expectations. This school provides excellent value for money and has outstanding capacity to improve.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Students of all backgrounds and abilities are welcomed and offered an outstanding curriculum that has an excellent balance of both academic and vocational programmes. The sixth form has grown considerably because an increasingly high proportion of Year 11 students choose to continue their studies at the school. One student summed up the views of many by saying, 'it's pointless going anywhere else because the school offers everything we need.' Students particularly appreciate the excellent support and guidance they are given and say that there is a good balance of teacher-directed and independent learning. Teaching is usually good and much is outstanding. Students contribute to the school community in many ways; for example, many tutor younger students in English.

Given their starting points students make good progress. Examination pass rates are around the national average although a below average proportion gain the highest grades. Very good links have been established with universities including Oxbridge, local universities and colleges and those further a field. Thus students' make appropriate choices for their futures and are often successful in gaining their first choice in higher education. Very few students leave the sixth form without going into further education, employment or training.

The sixth form has grown and improved significantly as a result of excellent leadership and management. A good deal of effort and time is taken to get to know the students well and, as a consequence, relationships between staff and students are excellent. Tracking of individual progress is carried out meticulously and ensures students are well aware of what they need to do to succeed. Self-evaluation of the sixth form is good although sometimes the analysis of data could be more consistent.

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

- Ensure marking is carried out effectively across all subjects to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

The proportion of students who start the school having attained high scores in the tests at the end of Key Stage 2 is well below average. In Key Stage 3, between 2006 and 2007, the results of national tests in mathematics show students reached standards that were still below average; however they made good progress to make up ground in mathematics. Progress in science was satisfactory; however, in English progress was slow. In Key Stage 4 in 2008, students' made good progress in English and satisfactory progress in mathematics. Given students' starting points they made excellent progress in other subjects, although the proportion attaining high grades was relatively low. Vulnerable groups and students with learning difficulties make particularly good progress, not only academically but also in their personal development. Inspectors observed students making good progress in most lessons.

GCSE results have improved significantly since the previous inspection and are well above the national average. Taken separately, 51% of students gained a grade A\* to C in English and a similar proportion in mathematics. However, this proportion falls to 38% when mathematics and English are taken together. Students attain particularly high pass rates in several subjects including manufacturing technology, science and art and design. Students make good progress in a broad spectrum of courses in the sixth form including work-related programmes and Open University modules.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Many aspects of students' personal development and well-being have improved since the previous inspection and are outstanding. Students express themselves freely and confidently and say they enjoy coming to school and are proud to be students at Kenton. Most feel that their views are taken seriously and influence decisions being made by the school. They behave well in lessons. Students respond sensibly to isolated incidents of poor behaviour, ensuring that the behaviour of a few does not have a detrimental impact on the experience of the majority. Serious bullying and racial incidents are rare, but when they do happen they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Students recognise the importance of regular attendance and the number of students who are frequently absent has reduced significantly. The rate of persistent absence is still above the national average, although it has fallen below the average for the city of Newcastle.

Rates of students staying on after 16 have increased and students recognise the importance of higher qualifications to improve their life chances. Learners say they feel safe around school and talk informatively about ways to manage risk when using the internet. Students take part in a wide range of activities that promote healthy lifestyles. They know about the importance of exercise and a healthy diet and understand the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse. Students are aware of the spiritual and cultural diversity of the wider community and respond in a positive way. They say the school is a harmonious community where all are treated fairly and with respect.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good and lessons often have outstanding features. Teachers plan lessons well, give very clear explanations and set challenging objectives. They use a wide range of activities to promote enjoyment and move students on at a good pace. Students are usually attentive and work hard. Information and communication technology is used particularly well to add interest to lessons, promote independent study and support research. Very occasionally, lessons proceed at a slower pace and have less variety in approach. The marking of pupils' work is of variable quality. Sometimes, it is extremely thorough and supports pupils of all abilities to produce work of high quality. However, it is not of even quality across the school or within subjects. The marking of work that involves calculation, graphs or diagrams does not always provide students with a consistent message about what is acceptable. Similarly there is varying practice in the correction of spelling, grammar and handwriting.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 1

The school has enhanced its already outstanding curriculum provision since the previous inspection. Its specialist status in technology and arts has had a significant impact upon progress and standards. The curriculum is strong in both key stages but particularly so in Key Stages 4 and 5. The development of 'pathways' for students offers a very wide variety of vocational as well as academic courses that are well matched to diverse individual needs. Students benefit from these outstanding opportunities which prepare them for their future economic well-being.

The opportunities for students to contribute to the school, local and international communities are very extensive. A considerable strength of the school is the extensive range of extra-curricular activities in which a large number of students participate. This is particularly evident at lunchtime. Of particular note is the range of fitness clubs which contributes to students' awareness of a healthy lifestyle. There are comprehensive courses in health and safety taken by all students that result in a safety certificate award.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

Kenton School is a very large school that maintains a very caring environment. Pupils are extremely well supported both academically and socially. Robust systems are in place which inform and guide students and parents about academic progress. Strategies are very successful in both encouraging reluctant students into school and motivating them to remain. Students are very appreciative of the support they receive from teachers and are confident they will listen to their concerns and take appropriate action. The school has productive relationships with all outside agencies to ensure the welfare of all pupils.

Sensitive and effective support is given to vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Support staff are well deployed and provide valuable help to students in lessons. The school meets all the requirements for safeguarding children. Systems to ensure child protection and safety follow current legislative guidance. Risk assessments, including those for out of school visits, are thorough and well managed. Older students are given

appropriate help and advice about subject choices and their career opportunities. Strong links with feeder schools ensure a smooth transition for students into Year 7.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

Inspectors agreed with the school that leadership and management has improved since the previous inspection and is outstanding. The management of the move to the new school has been excellent. Despite the potential for disruption during this process, most aspects of the school's work, including achievement, have improved. The development of the curriculum has been exceptional and much of the school's success relates to the way it so closely matches students' abilities and aptitudes. In the sixth form, excellent leadership has resulted in a significant growth in numbers of students, an extensive curriculum and an extremely supportive and positive culture.

Robust systems are used to ensure the good quality teaching and ensure effective continuous professional development for all staff. Teachers and support staff are carefully recruited and the use of temporary staff is kept to a minimum. The school's self-evaluation process is thorough and accurate and means the school accurately identifies priorities for development. Plans contain challenging yet achievable targets. The monitoring of the targets has improved significantly and is now good. The school is very successful in promoting community cohesion. Partnerships are developed very effectively and have a significant impact on many aspects of students' personal development and well-being. Equality of opportunity is at the heart of everything this school does.



Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

<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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
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	2	

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## 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	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

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

12 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Kenton School, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 3RU

Thank you for welcoming the inspection team to your school. We enjoyed the visit and particularly enjoyed meeting you and joining your lessons. I am very pleased to tell you that we think your school is outstanding.

You told us you were very happy with your education and enjoy the wonderful facilities the new building offers. Staff are very committed to treating each of you as an individual and working with you to raise standards. Even in such a large school there is a family atmosphere. We were pleased to see that you respond by behaving well and trying hard in lessons. Teaching is usually good and often excellent. We were impressed by the way in which teachers work so hard to make lessons so interesting. The care, guidance and support you receive are outstanding and this means that you are given every chance to develop into confident and mature young people.

Students join the school with a very wide range of talents, interests and needs. The school is very good at providing an excellent deal for everyone. Many of you take part in lunchtime clubs and after school activities. You have an opportunity to join a very wide range of courses including hairdressing, manufacturing technology and ceramics. The quality of art work that we saw displayed around the school was very impressive.

Mr Pearmain, the governors and staff have ambitious plans in place to make even more improvements and we are confident that they will achieve their goals. They have already shown that they can help the school go from strength to strength. We made one suggestion to help them. We think marking could improve to help you with the presentation of your work and basic skills such as spelling, handwriting and calculation. Most of your parents told us that the school gives you an excellent education and this was very well supported by the evidence we were given.

We think Kenton plays a very important part in the community by giving students such an excellent education. The school has been very successful in reducing the number of students who do not attend as often as they should but it is a shame that a small minority is still not taking full advantage of what is on offer. The number of you achieving five or more GCSEs and going on into the sixth form has increased greatly since the last inspection. The sixth form is very successful. This means when you leave school you are given the best possible preparation for employment or further education.

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to wish you all the best for the future.

Andrew Johnson HMI