

# The Knights Templar School

## Inspection report

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117509
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	326631
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 February 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Janet Thompson 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>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1357
Sixth form	287
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Graham Kingsley
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Andrew Pickering
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Park Street Baldock Hertfordshire SG7 6DZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01462620700
<b>Fax number</b>	01462620701

---

<b>Age group</b>	11–18
<b>Inspection date</b>	4 February 2009
<b>Inspection number</b>	326631

---

© 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 an Additional Inspector. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- achievement and standards of all pupils, particularly those from groups who form the minority within the school
- teaching and learning
- leadership and management - outcomes of the newly configured leadership team in evaluating effectiveness of provision and leading improvements (particularly in curriculum)
- effectiveness of the sixth form guidance and support and in raising attainment and achievement.

Inspectors gathered evidence from school's self-evaluation, achievement and attainment information, observation of lessons, scrutiny of documentation provided by the school, observation of the school at work, discussions with senior managers, talking to governors and pupils, and an analysis of parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors 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

Knights Templar is a large over-subscribed school serving the town of Baldock and surrounding villages. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion from relatively socially advantaged backgrounds is higher than average and the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average. The school has a large sixth form that also attracts students who have previously attended other schools. The school operates within consortia arrangements to provide an enhanced curriculum including diplomas and a range of sixth form subjects. The school has specialist status for sports and the performing arts.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Knights Templar is an outstanding school. It has an excellent and well-deserved reputation in the local community. Parents are overwhelmingly positive, particularly about the dedication of the staff and the outstanding well-rounded education provided for their children. Students make exceptional progress in academic skills as well as in their personal development and well-being. The majority of pupils start at the school with standards above those expected for their age and all make rapid progress while at the school. The levels pupils reach in core subjects are particularly high; mathematics has been very strong over a number of years. English and science are also strong and improving. There are many strengths in other subjects including the specialist subjects of music, drama and physical education. School leaders carefully and regularly monitor the progress made by individuals and groups across all subjects. This enables quick identification of any pupils needing additional help or changes in subject provision. Careful consideration is given to initiatives aimed at raising achievement further and those introduced make considerable difference to the progress made and opportunities offered. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, often because of additional support. For example, those with particular literacy difficulties are well supported by small group 'catch up' arrangements.

Pupils are courteous, behave responsibly and are motivated to strive in their work. They are supportive of one another and very good paired and small group work is a strong feature of some of the best lessons. In some very good examples, pupils worked in pairs to plan, organise and carry out their work and, in other lessons, pupils worked very effectively in small mixed groups, making sure all contributed and remained involved. The admirable behaviour is a result of clear rules with appropriate rewards and sanctions alongside carefully planned personalised guidance. Many pupils commented on the excellent support they receive from staff and each other. Pupils' skills and interests are encouraged extremely effectively. Participation in the vast range of opportunities at the school, particularly in performing arts and sports, is very high and helps to keep pupils physically healthy. Pupils take an active role in school improvement and are appreciative of the way in which the leadership team take their views seriously. The varied enterprise options further support pupils in developing excellent skills in preparation for the world of work.

Teaching is good and a growing proportion of lessons is outstanding. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and pupils behave well and engage in learning. Coaching teams of staff within the school have helped to improve teaching by sharing effective practice and ways of making lessons more effective. Many pupils believe lessons are improving because they are given different ways to develop knowledge and skills and this makes learning more interesting. In the best lessons, teachers give pupils the opportunities to challenge themselves to try harder activities and learn more. In turn, pupils relish the responsibility and rise to the challenge. There is still a small proportion of lessons where there is insufficient attention given to pupils' different prior learning and the level of work is not closely targeted to meet the needs of all pupils including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The Key Stage 4 curriculum is offered through four different pathways and is an excellent example of the school's constant drive for improvement. It provides a high level of flexibility that helps to engage all pupils. This exceptional curriculum is further enhanced by the strong partnerships with other local schools and colleges. The introduction of diplomas and more vocational courses, while keeping highly academic routes on offer, has been very successful

and pupils value the increased choice. The school has developed the curriculum very creatively and for example, twilight sessions for music help pupils continue with more courses than the main school-day curriculum can offer. Pupils have been given first-rate support in academic and careers guidance so that they are able to make the most of the choices available. Review of the Key Stage 3 curriculum has begun as the school has rightly identified that it is not as flexible to meet a variety of needs as the curriculum in other key stages. The wide range and well-chosen additional opportunities on offer make a significant contribution to the inclusive nature of the school. The performing arts and sports events make a real difference to the local community, as do the high number of pupils being involved in the Duke of Edinburgh award. Staff and pupils actively promote an understanding of local and global issues. In one example, pupils demonstrated a very clear understanding of the extent to which people have different perceptions of a similar event, due to their own life experiences.

Student services offer additional support to pupils when required and work very well with partners, for example counsellors and colleagues with a background in health care. Pupils in receipt of additional support value the way in which the school meets their different needs. There are a very few pupils who still struggle at the school and they are given additional support from local education centres. The school keeps in close touch with colleagues to monitor improvements in attendance and progress made by pupils. Many of the pupils accessing this type of external support follow a short programme and then successfully return to the school.

Pupils have individual meetings three times each year when targets are set and reviewed. The meetings are popular with pupils as they help to focus their learning. Alongside the meetings, the school has recently introduced more frequent, briefer reports for parents. Parents have not always received the changed format positively; some remarked that they want more personalised comments or greater explanation of what the grades mean and how their child can improve.

Staff at the school constantly seek to improve their own performance in raising the achievement of pupils and there is no room for complacency. Staff and pupils are empowered by exceptional leadership at all levels enabling the school to build on previously outstanding practice. The high levels of professionalism and commitment underpin the effectiveness of the school. Governors offer a very good level of support and challenge and there are good examples where their influence has helped to develop practices that improve equality of opportunity for all pupils.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

Students reach very high standards in the sixth form. Relatively recent changes to the organisation and leadership of the sixth form have had a profound effect on raising achievement and ensuring these exceptional standards. Students start with high standards and make good progress and this is rapidly increasing. These improvements, particularly in academic guidance, are a result of the staff listening to students' views as well as carefully reviewing results. The sixth form is very popular with pupils from the school and with pupils from the other schools from which they are admitted. Students attend regularly and are very involved in performing arts and sports opportunities. Lessons are good and in many subjects teaching is excellent. The school is aware that there remains some variability in the quality of teaching and learning between the wide range of subjects. The curriculum offers excellent choices including more vocational subjects. Staff relationships with students are very good. The guidance and support received by students is excellent as staff are very responsive to individual needs. Leading staff in the sixth form support the careers and guidance for pupils in Year 10 and 11, helping to

make transition effective. The school has managed to provide better study facilities even within the very restricted accommodation available. This, combined with access to virtual learning environments, has increased opportunities for independent study and students are making the most of these. Staff help students to become self-motivated, independent learners who gain many skills that will enhance their opportunities in future life. As a result students take responsibility seriously and have an active role in improving the sixth form and supporting the rest of the school.

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

- Enhance teachers' understanding of how to use the curriculum creatively fully to meet the needs of all learners in every lesson.

**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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
---	-----------------------	--------------

**Overall effectiveness**

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	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**

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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/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	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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

<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	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
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**

5 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Knights Templar School, Baldock, SG7 6Z

My colleague and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit to your school. Your contribution to the school and the local community is impressive. We enjoyed meeting with some of you and finding out about your views. You are right to be proud of the school as it is outstanding. I have listed some of the reasons why we agree with you and think your school is so effective.

- The standards you achieve throughout the school, including in your examination results, are outstanding and the vast majority of you make excellent progress.
- You have very good relationships with each other and with staff.
- You behave extremely well, becoming increasingly self-motivated in your learning.
- Your contribution to the school and the local community is exceptional.
- The school's leadership want to know what you think about the school and when they ask, you tell them your views in a mature and responsible way, helping them to make decisions and take actions that will improve the school.
- The curriculum opportunities you have in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form are exceptional and offer you a wide range of well-planned choices.
- The extra-curricular opportunities especially in the performing arts, sports and Duke of Edinburgh awards are excellent and I know you enjoy these as so many of you are involved in one or more activities.
- As you told us, the staff give you excellent academic and personal support.
- The staff at the school are highly committed to making sure you have the best possible opportunities to develop knowledge and skills that prepare you for the next stage in your life.

We have asked the school to make sure all teachers are as good as the best in using the curriculum creatively to meet all of your needs in all lessons.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson

Her Majesty's Inspector