

The King Edmund School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115337
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	338569
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	John Mitcheson HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1540
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Thorn
Headteacher	Mr Graham Abel
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2007
School address	Vaughan Close Rochford Essex
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 44 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, senior and middle leaders, teachers and two groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation including 177 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by students in all subjects in all key stages
- the reasons for the dip in performance in 2008
- students' attendance and persistent absence rates
- the impact of the school's two specialisms
- the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels.

Information about the school

The King Edmund School is a larger-than-average comprehensive school with a small sixth form serving the town of Rochford and its surrounding areas. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of students are White British; the proportion of students that have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement, is below average. The school has been a specialist Business and Enterprise school since 2002 and acquired a second specialism in Vocational Education in 2007.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

The King Edmund school provides its students with a good education. Highly effective, visionary leadership and prudent use of additional resources by an established headteacher has helped to enhance facilities, which are excellent, maintain above-average standards and secure the school's strategic, long-term success. Students enjoy school; they speak favourably about the provision made for them particularly the range of courses available and the care, guidance and support they receive, which is outstanding. Students feel very safe in school; all safeguarding arrangements are securely in place, behaviour and attitudes are good and bullying is rare. The vast majority of students share positive relations with their peers and their teachers, which helps them to acquire the qualifications and personal skills they need to enter further education or the work-place.

The staff know all individual students well and go out of their way to include all of them in the life of the school. Regular assemblies and religious education lessons help to increase all students' understanding of the wider world and contribute well to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Outstanding pastoral care provided by the staff and other extended services based on the school site ensure that students needing additional support and those at risk of disengaging remain in school, attend regularly and receive the support they need to benefit from what the school has to offer them. Exclusions are low; good support arrangements help students that misbehave to remain in school and continue their learning. Extensive partnerships, particularly those forged with other schools and agencies as part of the local schools' trust, make a significant contribution to the welfare and achievement of students, including those from challenging backgrounds.

Students' achievement and enjoyment of learning are good. Based on their starting points, the very large majority of students make good progress. The proportion of students attaining five GCSE C grades is usually above the national average but dipped on 2008, mainly due to changing courses in information and communication technology (ICT) and staffing issues in some subjects, which led to a significant number of students underachieving. Decisive action by senior leaders to address this had an immediate impact and overall results in 2009 returned to being above the national average. Three quarters of students attained at least five GCSE A*-C grades, which represents good progress when compared with their starting points. The proportion of students gaining five A*-C grades including English and mathematics improved by 5% to 47%, just below the national average, but above the school's predicted target. Girls continue to attain better than boys but the gap is closing, reflecting the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity.

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In the majority of lessons, good quality teaching helps students to learn well. Most teachers forge good relations with students, set high expectations and manage behaviour effectively. Good subject knowledge is used to plan starter-activities and select topics to make lessons interesting and enjoyable. A range of assessment data is collected to track individual students' progress. Observations by inspectors found that the school's views on the quality of teaching in some subjects are too generous. Teaching is merely satisfactory in lessons that do not include tasks suited to the needs of lower ability students, or do not provide sufficient challenge for the most able. In a small minority of lessons, students make inadequate progress because teachers fail to capture their interest at the start of lessons, or when teaching assistants are not deployed effectively to support the learning of less-able students.

Excellent facilities are used well to offer an innovative curriculum that is constantly evolving to meet the needs and interests of the majority of learners. Students select from an extensive range of GCSE courses and an increasing number of vocational awards. Vocational learning in ICT, business studies and science are strengths of the school and this reflects the good impact of its specialist status. Similarly, in the sixth form, students can select from an exemplary range of academic and vocational courses. The quality of teaching is much more consistent in the sixth form compared with the main school, mainly because teachers enjoy smaller groups of receptive students. Inspectors found that, although the quality of teaching and the curriculum choice available to students in the sixth form are generally good, this has not yet led to good outcomes for students, particularly in their attainment, progress and achievement. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory but the monitoring of students' progress and well-being lacks rigour.

The proven, good leadership of the headteacher and his senior team identified at the time of the previous inspection has been maintained. Collectively, they have sustained improvements by setting challenging targets, monitoring individual students' progress and by responding swiftly to under-performance. Middle leaders have also improved and are contributing well to raising and maintaining high standards in a number of subjects. However, comparative data on the relative performance of students in all areas of the curriculum clearly illustrate that some subject leadership is much less effective. Attendance has improved and fewer students are persistently absent from school. The appointment of an additional deputy Headteacher and a business manager has increased capacity to improve further, which is good. The school has a wealth of evidence to illustrate its current strengths and weaknesses but this has not been collated into a succinct overview of the school's performance. Governors are highly supportive and have been instrumental in the development of the school but do not possess all the information they need to challenge senior leaders fully. Value for money is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Turn satisfactory teaching into good or better teaching by:

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- ensuring that all lessons contain a range of tasks matched to the abilities of less-able students and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, then monitor the impact of this on their learning
- improving the deployment of classroom assistants so that less-able students receive the support they need
- giving more responsibility to the school's best practitioners to share their good practice and model exemplary teaching.
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation by:
 - collating all existing information into a single document
 - ensuring that all middle leaders and governors contribute to this process.
- Raise achievement in the sixth form by:
 - ensuring that the existing good provision leads to improved outcomes for all students
 - monitoring and evaluating the impact and effectiveness of leadership and management in the sixth form.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Attainment on entry to Year 7 is below the national average; a significant number of students in Key Stage 3 display low levels of literacy. This year, students in Year 9 attained standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT that are above national averages and school targets. In mathematics and ICT more than half of all students attained the higher Level 6 in teacher-assessments. Students continue to make good progress in Key Stage 4. Standards are consistently high in English, creative arts, physical education, science and business studies but are noticeably low in humanities, leisure and tourism, and health and social care. A small group of the most able students entered for GCSE examinations in science, statistics and English earlier this year generally attained well. Specialist targets were exceeded in business studies but narrowly missed in mathematics and ICT. The support for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very effective when they are withdrawn from lessons for additional support, but is less effective in lessons because classroom assistants are not always present to help them overcome their low literacy skills.

Excellent facilities and good relations amongst students and staff generate a positive school ethos. Students care for one another and many volunteer as prefects, school councillors and mentors. Their views are regularly shared by the school council and students say they feel listened to. Good food is provided at lunchtimes and many students take regular exercise to maintain a healthy lifestyle but a significant minority of parents who responded to questionnaires feel that not enough is done to encourage students to lead healthy lifestyles. The school has worked hard to enlist the support of parents, which has helped to improve attendance rates this year.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Regular lesson observations carried out by leaders and managers are helping to improve the quality of teaching. Staff training is tailored to meet the needs of specific members of staff but scope remains to offer further support for those whose lesson planning does not meet the needs of all students, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Teachers use quick-fire questioning to maintain the pace of learning and take time to confirm students' understanding before moving to the next stage. They set minimum target grades for students and regularly assess them to track their progress. However, not all teachers involve students in day-to-day assessments to gauge how well they are doing. Some improvements have been made in teachers' marking since the previous inspection; although good practice is evident in some areas it remains inconsistent across all subjects.

Key strengths of the curriculum include good partnerships with other providers and the wide choice of courses, which allows students to pursue their interests and attain well. Students are grouped by ability in both key stages, which helps school leaders guide students into an appropriate blend of academic and vocational pathways that will help them to achieve the most success. Lessons start early in the day and finish at two o'clock, allowing students to engage in a broad programme of enrichment each day, but the school does not accurately monitor how many of them attend activities on a regular basis. The school's trust status and the coordinated support services at its disposal

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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provide excellent individualised care and support for the students most in need of additional support and their families by helping them to re-engage in learning in school and participate in community life.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders' drive for improvement and ambitions for the school have ensured that good progress has been made since the previous inspection. Their monitoring and interventions have had a direct impact on ensuring results returned to the high standards achieved in previous years. Standards in English and to a lesser extent mathematics have improved significantly. Girls continue to attain better than boys but the gap is closing, reflecting the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity. A detailed school improvement plan and periodic 'health checks' of departments help senior leaders to confirm the strengths and areas for development in different subjects. Most middle leaders know their departments well, make formal observations of colleagues and show a growing understanding of whole school issues. They bid successfully for innovation grants to raise standards and improve the school's overall effectiveness. The recent, unforeseen absence of a deputy headteacher has left some gaps in knowledge about the school's performance and increased the workload of other leaders. Although this is being managed well, it is having an adverse effect on their monitoring and evaluation, particularly in updating the school's self-evaluation document. The school works effectively with parents and carers and other partners to promote a cohesive community. All safeguarding arrangements are securely in place.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

An inclusive approach that enables students with fewer than five A* to C GCSE grades to enter sixth form education means that attainment on entry is below the national average. By the end of Year 13, outcomes are largely satisfactory; standards are similar to the national average, although this varies across subjects, and more than half of all students progress onto higher education. The majority attend well, feel safe and enjoy their education. They speak enthusiastically about life in the sixth form. They develop mature attitudes towards study by working independently, cooperating with others and engaging in a number of enrichment activities designed to prepare them for the adult world. A large number serve the school by raising funds or volunteering as councillors, sports coaches and mentors. Students receive good guidance and support as they transfer from Key Stage 4 into the sixth form. Their tutors provide effective day-to-day care and support and monitor effectively how well all students are doing. Leaders and managers ensure that the sixth form operates satisfactorily but show a limited understanding of assessment data and how it can be used to promote students' progress.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

Although only a small percentage responded to questionnaires, those that did were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A very small minority of parents and carers said that they would like better communication with the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The King Edmund school to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 177 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1540 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	43	24	120	68	9	5	4	2
The school keeps my child safe	47	27	121	68	8	5	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	23	118	67	13	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	49	28	114	64	10	6	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	39	22	125	71	8	5	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	18	116	66	21	12	2	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	13	113	64	31	18	3	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	43	24	110	62	10	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	41	23	116	66	13	7	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	54	31	96	54	15	87	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	14	112	63	17	10	8	5
The school is led and managed effectively	59	33	101	57	11	6	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	59	33	102	58	9	5	2	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 December 2009.

Dear Students

Inspection of The King Edmund school, Rochford, SS4 1 TL

We visited your school this week and found that it provides you with a good education. Thank you for helping us to come to this judgement, especially those of you who met inspectors to share your views about the school. Throughout the visit you behaved well, were well-mannered and made us feel most welcome. We also found that good teaching helps you to make good progress. Many of you attain the qualifications you need for further study in the sixth form or for the work-place. You told us that you feel well-cared for and enjoy school. We found most aspects of your school to be good but noted that the quality of teaching could be more consistent and that those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities could be given more support to help you achieve equally as well as others. We also felt that the outcomes for those of you in the sixth form could be improved. We have asked your school leaders to make the following improvements.

Make more teaching good or better by:

- asking your teachers to plan lessons with different tasks suited to those of you with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- improving the ways in which classroom assistants support your learning
- letting the best teachers model good lessons to help others

Improve the knowledge the school has of its performance by:

- putting all of its information into a single document
- making sure that all your senior teachers and governors know about this

Raise achievement in the sixth form by:

- checking that the existing good teaching and curriculum opportunities help you to achieve even better.

Your school is led well by a good headteacher and his team of senior leaders. You can help them by asking your school council to let them know your views on what further improvements could be made. Best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson

Her Majesty's Inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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