

Thomas Keble School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115727
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	338648
Inspection dates	30 September –1 October 2009
Reporting inspector	Peter Limm 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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	686
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jim Lewis
Headteacher	Mr C Steer
Date of previous school inspection	3 January 2007
School address	Eastcombe Stroud GL6 7DY
Telephone number	01452 770301
Fax number	01452 770093
Email address	admin@thomaskeble.gloucs.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 27 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, the school improvement partner and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at its policies and development plans, its analyses of students' attainment and progress, a sample of students' work, and other key aspects of performance. Inspectors considered the views expressed in 236 questionnaires completed by parents and carers. They also considered the views expressed in 88 questionnaires completed by students of the school and 50 responses from staff.

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

- trends in students' attainment and achievement since 2006
- the impact of leadership and management, focusing particularly on how well the school has addressed the points for improvement identified in the previous inspection
- how well the school meets its statutory requirements in relation to equalities and safeguarding.

Information about the school

Thomas Keble School is heavily oversubscribed and is one of five schools serving the Stroud valleys, two of which are selective schools. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is higher than average. The school makes special provision for students with profound medical needs. The school has been awarded specialist status in technology and sport and is designated a High Performing Specialist School. The great majority of students come from White British backgrounds.

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

Thomas Keble School is a good and improving school. Students' attainment is broadly average but this represents good progress and all groups achieve well. One parent, echoing the views of most, said 'We are thoroughly happy and impressed with both the quality of learning and teaching, and of pastoral care offered by Thomas Keble School. We are pleased our child attends and hope to send our other three children to the school in the future.'

The headteacher provides clear and determined leadership, supported well by a committed team of staff and a strong governing body. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the school's key priorities and how its good provision can be improved further. They have responded well to the points identified in the last inspection and have high expectations of themselves and staff in general. In particular, they are clear that although teaching and learning are good, and there is a rising trend in students' attainment, the monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet resulting in all lessons being outstanding in quality. Excellent practice is not yet embedded consistently across the school, but the school's high quality systems and track record show that it is well placed to make the improvements necessary to ensure that this happens.

Students develop into mature and responsible young people. Attendance is high and a very large majority of students who responded to the questionnaire said they enjoy school. Lesson observations confirmed the school's view that students are eager to learn and contribute extremely well to the life of the school and the wider community. The school's exemplary approach to inclusion means that it promotes equality of opportunity extremely well.

The quality of the curriculum is good, and it is enhanced by good partnership working with other schools and through the specialist subjects. The good care, support and guidance provided by the school ensure that students are prepared well for the future. The school has good plans in place to promote community cohesion but these have yet to be embedded fully.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding lessons, building on existing excellent practice within the school, to establish greater consistency in the way students are motivated and challenged to improve attainment further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

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Students were seen to be making good progress in lessons. They concentrate well, are keen to learn and work well both individually and in groups. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good individual support in lessons and as a consequence they make good progress. Students attain GCSE results that are broadly average and rising. Some students do extremely well. While girls attain better results than boys, the difference is in line with the national picture. Performance across most subjects is good, and it is outstanding in some subjects such as mathematics.

Students behave well in lessons and make a good contribution to their learning. Students said that occasionally, when lessons are less stimulating and challenging, some of their peers do not behave so well. There is a calm atmosphere around the school and at lunchtimes, and students say they feel safe. They demonstrate safe practice in lessons, as was observed in science, PE and design and technology.

Students respond enthusiastically to opportunities to have a say about their school environment. Some act as ambassadors who visit other local schools to compare practices and provision and, on return, help the school to make decisions about improving provision. The school's international links are used well to develop students' awareness of how students in other countries live and what they learn. Some students nevertheless felt they did not have a clear understanding of the differences between their own community and more diverse social and ethnic contexts. The school has plans to address their concerns. Students' moral and social development is very strong.

Students develop their personal qualities well. They recognise the steps they need to take to achieve their goals. Their workplace skills are being developed well and students said they were confident about making decisions regarding their future education and careers. Their achievements in basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are good. Students respond extremely well to the good range of initiatives provided by the school to promote healthy lifestyles.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
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	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2

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

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	
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Of the 27 lessons observed, 74% were good or better, with no difference between the key stages. Teachers' planning focused well on what students were expected to learn. At its best, teaching demonstrated a good mix of pace and stretch, with opportunities for students to be engaged actively in their learning, often in groups or pairs. The best lessons also provided good opportunities for students to undertake independent learning and research tasks. Less successful, though still satisfactory, lessons tended to limit the opportunities students had to discuss their work or ideas and progress was slower. Progress was better where teaching assistants were deployed carefully by teachers to engage actively with their target students and give them more effective classroom support. In the less successful lessons, some students occasionally lost interest.

Assessment is used well to support learning. There is a common approach to assessment which enables both staff and students to know what went well and what could be improved. There are good examples of students being encouraged to evaluate their own work and learn effectively from each other. Students interviewed knew what their targets were because of the helpful feedback they receive from teachers and knew what they needed to do to improve.

The range of option choices is wide for a small school, and the curriculum is well matched to students' needs and aspirations. It is enriched by the good use of the school's specialist subjects. Work with partners enables the school to offer more vocational courses than was the case at the time of the previous inspection. Provision is customised well for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that these students make good progress. Tutorial time is used effectively to support students' learning and personal development. The formal curriculum is enhanced by a growing programme of extra-curricular activities which students enjoy, and in which they participate enthusiastically and in large numbers.

The school uses external agencies well to enhance its own internal support for individuals with extra needs. Pastoral care is good. Vulnerable students are very carefully monitored. Additional support for students experiencing difficulties is provided by effective provision through withdrawal sessions. Students receive good support on transition to the school and when leaving it. The school's policies to encourage regular attendance for all groups of students have resulted in improved attendance figures. The

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number of students excluded from school is low and falling.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has established a clear vision for how the school should develop, focusing tightly on continuing to raise attainment for all groups of students. Leaders and managers have a good grasp of what the school needs to do to achieve this vision, particularly through even better leadership of teaching and learning. Planning and self-evaluation are thorough. Underperformance is addressed effectively so that students' achievement is good and improving. The school's promotion of equality of opportunity is outstanding and it meets the statutory requirements for equalities and addressing discrimination extremely well.

Leadership and management of the school's two specialisms and related subjects are extremely good, and the improved specialist facilities have been used well by the local community and other local schools.

The governing body has a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas requiring improvement. It provides a good balance of support and challenge to ensure the school maintains its good reputation in the locality and boosts attainment.

The school works very effectively to engage parents and carers in their children's learning through an extensive range of focus groups on key issues, excellent consultation through questionnaires and tightly focused seminar meetings. Despite this, a very small number of parents feel that communication with the school is not always effective. Good partnerships with a range of organisations outside the school are used well to support students' learning and well-being.

The school has made adequate progress on promoting community cohesion, auditing its current work and planning to build on its very strong international links with a number of countries. It is currently planning to provide greater opportunities for students to link with local schools as a first step to working more closely with others from more diverse ethnic and faith groups in different parts of the country.

The school provides good value for money, and resources are managed and deployed well. There are adequate procedures for meeting statutory requirements relating to safeguarding.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Just under half the parents returned the inspection questionnaire, which represents a good return. Their views confirm those derived from the school's own survey of parental views. Parents are largely very satisfied with all aspects of the school's work. The views expressed were mostly very positive, particularly in relation to children's safety and the leadership and management of the school. Inspectors agree with these views.

A small number disagreed that the school helps them to support their child's learning or takes account of their views. Inspectors recognise that any lapse in communication is a concern for those involved, but consider that the school works extremely hard to communicate with parents, take account of their views and seek ways to engage them with their children's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Thomas Keble 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 236 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 686 students registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	116	49	111	47	7	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	122	52	112	48	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	137	58	86	36	3	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	109	46	105	45	7	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	112	48	106	45	7	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	95	40	110	47	14	6	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	33	133	56	8	3	2	1
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)	106	45	106	45	3	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	104	44	108	46	8	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	110	47	97	41	10	4	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	76	32	114	48	13	6	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	150	64	74	32	3	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	159	67	72	31	2	1	0	0

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.



2 October 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Thomas Keble School, Stroud GL6 7DY

The inspection team enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views when your school was inspected recently. A number of you and your parents completed a questionnaire to help us see what you think about the school. I hope you will talk to them about the inspection report because it explains what the school does well and how it can become even better.

Thomas Keble is a good school which continues to improve. You told us that staff provide you with good support, care and guidance, that you enjoy learning and that you make the most progress when you are given stimulating and interesting work. You said you feel safe at school and that you have good opportunities to prepare for the future. You attend very well and clearly make a tremendous contribution to the school and local communities. You thought the school helps you to be healthy, and we feel that it does this really well.

The school's examination results are about average, but you make good progress in most lessons. Teaching is good overall and you work hard and behave well. The headteacher is determined to improve the school further and he is supported well by a good team of staff and governors. Following what you told us, and what we observed, we have asked the school to:

- make sure that there are more outstanding lessons with varied learning activities so that you can attain even better results.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Peter Limm

Her Majesty's Inspector

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