

# Knightsfield School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117666
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	339041
<b>Inspection dates</b>	19–20 January 2010
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Farrell

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	51
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	3
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Donald Allan
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Lucille Leith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Knightsfield Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire
<b>Telephone number</b>	01707 376874
<b>Fax number</b>	01707 321738
<b>Email address</b>	admin@knightsfield.herts.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Nine lessons, nine teachers, two tutorials, an assembly and an activity club were observed. Some parents were contacted by telephone, and meetings were held with parents, students, staff and governors. The inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of policies, data on students' progress and curriculum planning. Forty-one parental questionnaires were scrutinised. The majority of the inspection time was spent observing learning.

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

- the provision in the sixth form to ascertain the effectiveness of liaison arrangements and sixth form monitoring and their impact on attainment and progress
- the effectiveness of the governing body to establish any areas that might be improved.

## Information about the school

Knightsfield is a specialist sensory/physical regional day and residential school educating students who are deaf. Most have severe or profound hearing loss. The school provides for students from Hertfordshire, surrounding local authorities, and London boroughs. It has a Sports Mark Award, an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Quality Mark, and a Basic skills Agency Mark. A high proportion of students have additional needs, such as learning difficulties and visual impairment. About a third of students are from Black and minority ethnic groups and a sixth speak English as an additional language. The school has a partnership agreement with a local specialist science college with which it shares its campus. This enables all students to participate in lessons at the college. Sixth form provision is through a consortium arrangement comprising local secondary schools and specialist colleges. For those attending the sixth form, Knightsfield supports students' hearing and pastoral needs and provides a note taker and teacher, and schools in the local sixth form consortium support their academic needs. The school offers a range of extended services including parent workshops. The school attained specialist status since the previous inspection. The residential provision was not inspected during this inspection.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Knightsfield offers outstanding provision. The great majority of parents speak very highly of the provision. One says the school, '...works very hard to provide all children with the best environment for them to learn and develop in all areas to their best potential.' Inspirational leadership and management of the headteacher and senior managers and the excellent commitment of carefully recruited staff ensure standards and expectations are very high. Extremely well informed governors ensure the school continues to excel. Rigorous self-evaluation pinpoints numerous areas to celebrate and additional opportunities for improvement and to be innovative. This and the passion to do even better contributes to the school's excellent capacity to improve further. Safeguarding is a very high priority and equality of opportunity is central to the school's work because each student is valued. Hence, students are extremely well cared for and achieve their very best.

Outstanding teaching and assessment includes excellent teacher questioning and encouragement of speaking and listening, very close teamwork between staff, and many opportunities for students to develop thinking skills. The outstanding, coherent curriculum fully meets students' requirements and is closely monitored to ensure it remains relevant. As part of the school's specialist status, in which the school is meeting its targets very well, dynamic teaching of thinking and listening skills keeps Knightsfield at the forefront of curriculum innovation. Where students attend the adjacent mainstream college, lessons are very carefully chosen to ensure students benefit fully. Students are excellently prepared for life beyond school. The outstanding care, guidance and support involves detailed and accurate assessments leading to precisely targeted support so students take the fullest advantage of opportunities for learning. Transition into school and life beyond is extremely well managed and Knightsfield works very closely with others to ensure the best for students. Accordingly, all students and different groups of students make excellent progress. While attainment on entry to the school is low, students' progress soon accelerates so that by the time they are ready to leave they are extremely well prepared for future life and work. Students greatly enjoy school and are proud of Knightsfield and of their own achievements because the ethos recognises and celebrates effort and commitment. Behaviour is excellent and students greatly care for each other, for example, older students help younger ones with reading. In the good, well managed sixth form, students make good progress and are achieving well in a range of A level and BTECH studies because of the positive impact of teaching, the support they receive and a curriculum enriched by educational visits. Excellent care, guidance and support encourage students' independence, their outstanding personal development and behaviour and their very strong contribution to the community. The

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carefully monitored arrangements by which students are taught mainly in secondary mainstream schools, supported by teaching assistants and academic tutoring from Knightsfield, encourages good progress. However, not enough time is allocated by Knightsfield staff for tutorial support.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve students' progress in the sixth form by increasing the amount of time spent by Knightsfield staff on tutorial support including checking students' subject specific vocabulary and understanding, and consolidating their examination and study techniques.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

**1**

Students' attainment remains below average by the end of Year 11 especially in literacy due to the delay the large majority experience in gaining language skills. They enter school with low attainment but soon begin to acquire knowledge, develop understanding, and learn skills, especially speaking and listening at a rapid rate. They are extremely attentive and sustain high levels of concentration, displaying very positive attitudes to challenging activities. Outcomes are outstanding because progress accelerates as students move through the school while they show enormous enjoyment for learning. In an outstanding Year 8 science lesson about the expanding universe, the inspiring and knowledgeable teaching and very skilled teaching assistant support along with excellent activities led to students being exceptionally enthused and making outstanding progress. Students confidently asked questions and began to grasp complex ideas. Students reach or exceed challenging targets. Older students gain a wide range of examinations including GCSEs and Entry Levels. Different groups including those for whom English is an additional language, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, make excellent progress.

Students say they always feel safe in school, and have a very good understanding of risks and how to stay safe. They are very confident the school will effectively deal with any concerns. Students eagerly participate in a wide range of physical activities and eat healthily, responding positively to the school's promotion of health and emotional well-being. They enthusiastically approach activities to improve the school and their relationships with the wider community, where their interaction is widely valued. Attendance is above average despite regular medical appointments. Students apply basic skills very effectively across many areas of the school's activities, gaining very strong competencies in ICT. They respond vigorously to opportunities preparing them for life beyond school, are punctual and settle quickly to work. Demonstrating high levels of fascination, they are very open to new ideas. Students' enthusiasm encompasses a wide range of sporting, cultural and artistic activities. Their knowledge and understanding of the diversity of the community is exceptionally strong. There is a high level of respect and understanding, and very strong social skills are supported by excellent progress in speaking and listening.

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*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

<b>Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
<b>The extent to which pupils feel safe</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Pupils' behaviour</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	2
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Outstanding teaching including use of assessment leads to excellent progress. Teachers' skilful encouragement of discussion and the thorough assessment of work enable pupils to be fully aware of how they can improve. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils are touched with humour. Harmonious teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants leads to sharply focused support. In depth knowledge of individual students and their capabilities enables teachers to plan very effectively for their learning and development. This planning translates into stimulating and engaging lessons, which highly motivate students. Teachers' very secure subject knowledge is used fully in ensuring very effective and challenging questioning.

The outstanding curriculum is very successfully adapted to students' requirements. It underpins the very wide range of relevant and stimulating learning opportunities. Literacy, numeracy and ICT are tightly threaded throughout the curriculum. The curriculum is very effectively extended through the meticulous selection of lessons. Knightsfield students attend in the adjacent mainstream secondary school. Audiology and speech and language therapy is coherently embedded in the curriculum. Students

<sup>1</sup> 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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are excellently prepared for life beyond school by work experience and other provision. They participate fully in sporting activities in the adjoining secondary school. The curriculum is greatly enriched by a range of educational trips, visitors, and features such as the performing arts week.

The excellent care, guidance and support include very clear, exceptionally detailed assessments of every aspect of students' learning and development. This leads to very well targeted support enabling all students to make the best of opportunities provided. Excellent attention is given to all aspects of care, guidance and support including students' transition into school and life after school. Students express high levels of confidence in the school's ability to help and advise them. One stated, 'This school has always offered me help and will always fight for you.' The school works very closely with families, students and other agencies to thoroughly sustain the learning, development and well being of individual students including those with additional needs and other challenging circumstances.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Staff morale is high because the headteacher and senior management team and those with responsibilities at all levels work unceasingly to successfully embed a sense of community, purpose and ambition in the school. Self-evaluation is deep and searching and involves the excellent analysis of carefully gathered and pertinent information. Hence, the process leads to excellent provision and outcomes. Governors provided excellent support and challenge because of their range of expertise and knowledge. The excellent engagement of parents means they are as fully informed and involved as possible. Valued partnerships with others including schools, universities, and services such as the health authority are excellent leading to benefits for students' learning and welfare. Equality of opportunity is central to all aspects of the school's work and is evaluated extremely well. Robust safeguarding procedures are supported by excellent policies. Community cohesion is a very strong element in the curriculum and there is vivid evidence throughout the school of its successful impact.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b>	<b>1</b>
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
<b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Sixth form

- provision is through a consortium arrangement comprising local secondary schools and specialist colleges. For those attending the sixth form, Knightsfield supports students' hearing and pastoral needs and provides a note taker and teacher, and schools in the local sixth form consortium support their academic needs. The school offers a range of extended services including parent workshops. The school attained specialist status since the previous inspection. The residential provision was not inspected during this inspection.

### Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school? 1 The school's capacity for sustained improvement 1 Main findings Knightsfield offers outstanding provision. The great majority of parents speak very highly of the provision. One says the school, '...works very hard to provide all children with the best environment for them to learn and develop in all areas to their best potential.' Inspirational leadership and management of the headteacher and senior managers and the excellent commitment of carefully recruited staff ensure standards and expectations are very high. Extremely well informed governors ensure the school continues to excel. Rigorous self-evaluation pinpoints numerous areas to celebrate and additional opportunities for improvement and to be innovative. This and the passion to do even better contributes to the school's excellent capacity to improve further. Safeguarding is a very high priority and equality of opportunity is central to the school's work because each student is valued. Hence, students are extremely well cared for and achieve their very best.

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Levels. Different groups including those for whom English is an additional language, and those from ethnic minority backgrounds, make excellent progress.

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Taking into account:

Pupils' attainment

The quality of pupils' learning and their progress

The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress 2 4 1 1 The extent to which pupils feel safe 1 Pupils' behaviour 1 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 1 2 The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 1

How effective is the provision? Outstanding teaching including use of assessment leads to excellent progress. Teachers' skilful encouragement of discussion and the thorough assessment of work enable pupils to be fully aware of how they can improve. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils are touched with humour. Harmonious teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants leads to sharply focused support. In depth knowledge of individual students and their capabilities enables teachers to plan very effectively for their learning and development. This planning translates into stimulating and engaging lessons, which highly motivate students. Teachers' very secure subject knowledge is used fully in ensuring very effective and challenging questioning.

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Taking into account:

The use of assessment to support learning 1 1 The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships 1 The effectiveness of care, guidance and support 1

How effective are leadership and management? Staff morale is high because the headteacher and senior management team and those with responsibilities at all levels work unceasingly to successfully embed a sense of community, purpose and ambition in the school. Self-evaluation is deep and searching and involves the excellent analysis of carefully gathered and pertinent information. Hence, the process leads to excellent provision and outcomes. Governors provided excellent support and challenge because of their range of expertise and knowledge. The excellent engagement of parents means they are as fully informed and involved as possible. Valued partnerships with others including schools, universities, and services such as the health authority are excellent leading to benefits for students' learning and welfare. Equality of opportunity is central to all aspects of the school's work and is evaluated extremely well. Robust safeguarding procedures are supported by excellent policies. Community cohesion is a very strong element in the curriculum and there is vivid evidence throughout the school of its successful impact. These are the grades for leadership and management The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement

Taking into account:

The leadership and management of teaching and learning 1 1 The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met 1 The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers 1 The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being 1 The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of

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opportunity and tackles discrimination 1 The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures 1 The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion 1 The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money 1

Sixth form The good sixth form is well led and managed by two staff sharing academic tutoring and liaison with other schools. The Year 12 students make good progress and are achieving well in a range of A level and BTECH studies. The effective curriculum includes an engaging range of enrichment activities. The impact of teaching and support is good. In a psychology lesson taught in the adjoining mainstream secondary school, a Knightsfield student participated well and made good progress because they were confident the teaching assistant's note taking was available to supplement points made in the lesson. Students' personal development and behaviour are excellent and they contribute to the community very well, for example, providing reading support and football coaching for younger students. Students make excellent strides to improve their employability and economic well-being. They take responsibility for their health and safety and well-being because support provided by Knightsfield inspires their confidence to enable them to do so. Carefully monitored support including academic tutoring aids progress. However, not enough time is allocated for Knightsfield staff to check students' subject specific vocabulary and understanding, and to help them to consolidate their examination and study techniques.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

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

## Views of parents and carers

The response from parents was high. The great majority were very positive about the school. All agreed their child was safe and that the school kept them well informed about progress. In other aspects, very small numbers of disagree statements were spread over different areas, with no one area being of general concern to parents. Six responses (11%) disagreed their child was well prepared for the future and that the school took account of concerns although no evidence was found in the inspection to support these views. Parents who were seen at a meeting were unanimous in their appreciation of all the school offered.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Knightsfield 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 41 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 51 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	19	50	18	47	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	28	74	10	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	22	58	16	42	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	16	42	18	47	3	8	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	22	58	15	39	1	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	17	45	20	53	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	53	15	39	0	0	0	0
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)	15	39	17	45	2	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	61	12	32	2	5	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	39	18	47	2	5	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	34	19	50	2	5	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	21	55	14	37	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	20	53	16	42	2	5	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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



22 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Knightsfield School, Hertfordshire, AL8 7LW

It was a great pleasure for my colleague and I to meet you when we recently inspected your school. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and by your great (and justifiable) pride in Knightsfield.

There were many things we judged excellent. The school is outstandingly well led and managed. Teaching, the curriculum and the care and support you are offered are all excellent. You make great progress in your studies and in your personal and social development. The sixth form is good and sixth form students work extremely hard.

There is one area in which the school could do better so I have asked staff to:

Improve sixth form students' progress by increasing the amount of time spent by Knightsfield staff on tutorial support.

I feel confident the sixth formers will take the fullest advantage of this extra opportunity.

With every good wish for your future,

Yours sincerely

Michael Farrell

Lead inspector



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