

# King Ethelbert School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118810
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	339307
<b>Inspection dates</b>	18–19 November 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Helen Hutchings

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>	Modern (non-selective)
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	729
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Dr Virginia Austin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Paul Luxmoore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 December 2006
<b>School address</b>	Canterbury Road Birchington Kent CT7 9BL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01843 831999
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 30 lessons, an assembly and registration periods, and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at students' work, teachers' planning and assessment information, the school's planning documents and the arrangements for safeguarding students. In addition, 179 parental questionnaires were analysed.

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

- how the school is improving students' attainment in mathematics and ensuring that those with the most complex learning needs keep pace with other students
- the sustainability of recent improvements
- the impact of the federation and specialist status
- the success with which the school promotes students' personal development.

## Information about the school

King Ethelbert School is smaller than many secondary schools. It draws its students from the local area where over 30% of secondary age pupils are selected for grammar schools. The great majority of students are from White British backgrounds with a few from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average and covers a broad range of needs. The proportion with statements of special educational needs is high. An above average number of students are in local authority care. In September 2006, the school gained its specialism in visual arts. In January 2009, it entered a formal federation with Dane Court Grammar School and operates under a single governing body. An executive headteacher has overall responsibility for both schools and a head of school took up her post when they federated. In recognition of its work, the school holds Investors in Careers, Investor in People, Healthy Schools, School Travel Plan, Artsmark, Eco School and International School awards.

**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

King Ethelbert School continues to provide an outstanding quality of education for its students. It rightly describes itself as a school where 'everybody is valued and supported, everybody is important and everybody works together', making the school an excellent place to be. A shared sense of purpose exudes across the school, and mutual respect and understanding underpin all its work. Common goals and hard work towards them are the norm. This positive ethos is highly successful in helping students to develop confidence so that they make excellent progress in their learning. A key strength of the school is the way in which it meets the individual needs of students through its outstanding curriculum and high quality care, guidance and support, particularly for those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Students are well prepared for their futures, with opportunities for work-related learning which guides them to appropriate options after school. As a consequence, the vast majority of students progress into further education.

Following a dip in standards after the last inspection, students' attainment has risen rapidly so that it is in line with overall national averages, representing excellent progress for all groups from their low starting points when they join the school. In previous years boys did not make as much progress as girls, but in 2009 this trend was reversed. Progress in English and mathematics has been particularly strong, partly as a result of a programme to promote these subjects within others. Staff recognise that there is still room to develop literacy further across the curriculum. Nonetheless, students' achievement is good overall. The majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or outstanding, and there is a good programme in place to develop consistent practice across the school to bring less effective teaching to match the quality of the best. Students say that they enjoy learning most when they are actively involved in taking responsibility for their own learning, but this was not the case in some of the less successful lessons. Students have a good understanding of what they have to do to reach the next level or grade. Teachers mark work regularly and generally offer advice for improvement, but do not always give students opportunities to follow up on the guidance given.

Students have many opportunities to influence decision making, living the school's motto 'designing the future'. For example, the school council led others in a consultation about the configuration of the new buildings due to be completed early next year. Students show their appreciation of all that staff do for them through the considerate, helpful and highly cooperative way they conduct themselves. An ethos of mutual trust and cooperation characterises relationships between adults and students. Students report feeling safe and praise staff highly for ensuring this. They have absolute confidence that

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matters relating to their safety will be dealt with and that when rare incidents of bullying occur, staff will intervene to bring about a satisfactory resolution. However, the attendance of a few students is low in spite of the efforts made by the school to improve it.

Managers and governors have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring further improvement because of rigorous and supportive monitoring. There is no complacency and the drive for improvement is relentless, shown in positive staff engagement with a national improvement programme and close partnership with its federated school. The extremely effective leadership at all levels, together with the record of success in bringing about improvement, means that the school is fully capable of further improvement.

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

- Improve students' attainment further by:
  - increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons which give students opportunities to be more actively involved in their learning
  - requiring students to follow up the advice given when work is marked
  - strengthening the plans to promote literacy further across the curriculum.
- Consolidate improvements in attendance this year by:
  - using a broader range of approaches to support those parents whose children do not attend regularly or reminding them of the consequences of not sending their children to school regularly.

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

**1**

Students make exceptional progress throughout their time in the school. They sustain high levels of concentration in lessons, and are exceeding the challenging targets set for them. Students willingly engage in additional lessons and activities because they see their confidence grow and take a pride in their achievements. A focus of the inspection related to boys' attainment and that of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities because these groups had not made as much progress as other groups in previous years. This is no longer the case and all groups of students make outstanding progress because lessons are closely matched to students' needs and all are fully engaged in their learning. Attainment in mathematics is not as strong as in English, but the school is rapidly narrowing the gap between the two subjects. As a result of robust action taken to accelerate each student's progress in 2009, GCSE attainment in English and mathematics improved rapidly over previous years. Already this year a significant minority of students in Year 11 have gained good grades in GCSE mathematics, confirming an ongoing improvement trend. Students' improving attainment in English and mathematics helps them to do well in other subjects. Performance across subjects is relatively even, although students do particularly well in the school's specialist subjects of English and art. Students' performance in these areas is particularly impressive and

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makes an excellent contribution to their cultural development. This is shown in their appreciation for different cultures and their work prominently displayed around the school.

Students behave in a manner which demonstrates their understanding of morals and justice, and their enthusiasm to take on new experiences. Students are polite to each other and to adults as they move around the school, including social spaces and when not directly supervised by adults. Their thinking is often challenged in lessons, and their mature responses show clearly that they accept others' views while developing their own codes, making a highly effective contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, a tutor session considering whether the individual is more important than the group resulted in a well-considered debate, helping individuals to reflect on their own values. Students of all ages readily take on responsibilities, including as prefects, peer mentors or reading buddies, understanding that this contributes well to their own personal development as well as those being supported. They have an exceptional understanding of being healthy, and very much appreciate the transition to more healthy options in the canteen. As one student said, 'It's impossible to access unhealthy food once you walk through the school gates.' Another group of students expressed the view that because of their knowledge of healthy eating, students are influencing their families and local community in this regard. Students understand other aspects of living healthily such as how to avoid stress and take up a range of physically active extra-curricular clubs, with many sustaining regular attendance over time. By contrast, while students' attendance is in line with national averages, a small minority of them or their parents and carers have not responded to the robust efforts made by school staff to encourage regular attendance.

*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>	3
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>

<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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<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> Taking into account: Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	<b>2</b>
	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

## How effective is the provision?

Students' outstanding progress is due to a number of factors including typically good teaching, a highly personalised curriculum, and excellent care, guidance and support which builds students' belief in themselves and their achievements. The school is now fully staffed with permanent appointments, aiding greater consistency of teaching across the school. Teachers use their expertise very effectively to ensure that lessons are interesting for students. Teachers' excellent relationships with students, often using humour and praise for encouragement, mean that lessons are enjoyable. In a few, however, while work is set at an appropriately challenging level, students are too 'spoon fed'. In these cases, students are not required to think things through sufficiently for themselves, which reduces opportunities for them to deepen their understanding. Teachers mark and assess students' work accurately, often providing very detailed points for improvement. However, students have too few opportunities to put this guidance into practice. Students are prepared well for public examinations, because teachers run a wide range of additional revision sessions, often during school holidays just prior to examinations.

Students are well known as individuals and there is always someone on hand for them to turn to for advice and support. The quality of information and guidance is outstanding, enabling students to make well-informed choices at transition points such as when choosing examination options or prior to leaving school.

The curriculum provides a highly successful match to students' interests and abilities. Lower attaining or gifted and talented students benefit from a curriculum that is very well tailored to their needs. The highly individualised programmes for a number of students have enabled them to flourish, and in some cases achieve national recognition. The curriculum for older students includes a wide range of academic and vocational courses, including national diploma courses developed with other schools. Working with key partner organisations and activities with community groups play a highly important part of learning and the development of workplace skills. All Key Stage 4 students follow at least one vocational course. The curriculum for younger students is highly successful in using topics that stimulate their interests, often culminating in a special event such as the 'medieval banquet' which took place during the inspection. Students also benefit from an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities, including trips, visits and large numbers of sporting and cultural activities.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<p><b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b></p> <p>Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms</p>	
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<p><b>The quality of teaching</b></p> <p>Taking into account:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The use of assessment to support learning</p>	<b>2</b>
	2
<p><b>The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships</b></p>	<b>1</b>
<p><b>The effectiveness of care, guidance and support</b></p>	<b>1</b>

## How effective are leadership and management?

A key reason for the school's success lies in the exceptionally expert and determined leadership of the executive headteacher, head of school and the senior leadership team. Their passion to ensure the best possible outcomes for everyone is infectious so that all, students and staff alike, are valued equally. The personalised curriculum and the extra time adults give when students need it are testament to the inclusive practice and the highly effective promotion of equal opportunities. The school pursues ambitious strategies for particular groups and these have ensured that students can achieve well whatever their personal circumstances. Senior staff and middle leaders, some of whom are relatively new to the school, ensure that actions are highly focused to have the greatest possible impact. Of particular note, is the way in which the staff make highly effective use of data to identify where further improvements can be made to maximise opportunities for all students to achieve.

Safeguarding requirements are good. Policies and procedures are regularly scrutinised and consistently applied. The governing body monitors the work of the school closely and has taken courageous decisions to ensure a strong future for it, such as setting up the federation. This is only one example of the school's strong purpose to raise students' aspirations and take responsibility for all young people and their families within the local community. Staff work well with their colleagues in the partner school to arrange additional activities to benefit students. Joint activities with local primary schools, often through the school's specialist school status, further enrich links within the locality. The school is a tolerant and cohesive community and the school has an in-depth understanding of its context and responds actively to the needs of the local community. Links with India and curriculum topics are adding well to students' global awareness. Although the provision to promote community cohesion is good, senior leaders have not fully evaluated the school's approach to help identify areas to develop further.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<p><b>The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement</b></p> <p>Taking into account:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">The leadership and management of teaching and learning</p>	<b>1</b>
	1
<p><b>The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met</b></p>	<b>1</b>



<b>Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate</b> Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms	
<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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

### **Views of parents and carers**

Most parents and carers are positive about the school and supportive of it, making comments such as, 'I always found the school to be supportive, honest and fair' and 'I know that if I have any concerns that they will be dealt with sensitively and professionally'. Parents and carers are particularly pleased with the way in which students are kept safe and how it is led and managed. A few parents or carers raised concerns in their comments but these related to individual issues. Greatest concerns were indicated about students' unacceptable behaviour, but inspectors found that behaviour is outstanding, and no incidents of disruptive behaviour or rudeness were seen during the inspection. A few parents or carers indicated that their child was not making enough progress. Inspectors found that students' progress overall was outstanding and that, while individual students do not make consistent progress over time, there is no difference in the progress made by groups of students.

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at King Ethelbert 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 179 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 729 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	70	39	101	56	6	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	66	37	11	62	1	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	73	41	91	51	13	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	72	40	88	49	17	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	70	39	97	54	11	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	58	32	103	63	13	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	50	28	113	63	13	7	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)	54	30	101	56	10	6	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	30	109	61	13	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	33	96	54	15	8	7	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	46	26	111	62	13	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	60	34	108	57	8	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	76	43	88	49	11	6	1	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"><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.**



20 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of King Ethelbert School, Birchington, CT7 9BL

We greatly appreciated your politeness and welcome when we visited your school. On behalf of the inspectors, I would like to thank you for showing us your work and helping with the inspection. I welcome this opportunity to let you know about our judgements and hope you will take time to read the whole report.

King Ethelbert really lives its motto 'designing the future'. It continues to be outstanding so you are right to be so proud of it. Here are the just some of the reasons:

- the outstanding progress you make during your time in school, giving you a good basis for study or work beyond school
- the great improvements recently in Year 11 examination results
- your enjoyment of school activities and the way you get involved, largely because you know that others listen to your views and value what you say
- the impressive way in which you try to lead healthy lifestyles
- the good quality teaching and the outstanding curriculum meeting your needs
- the strong ethos of mutual support and good relationships between students and adults, making the school a very tolerant and cohesive society
- the way in which the specialist subjects are enriching your experiences
- the highly effective leadership of the executive headteacher and head of school, who are well supported by governors, the staff, and you and your families.

We know that you will do your best to support the school's drive for even more improvement and we have asked staff to make sure that:

- you have more lessons where you are actively involved in your own learning
- they plan more ways for you to improve your literacy skills
- you follow up on the advice given when your work is marked
- those of you who do not attend regularly are given more help to do so.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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