



Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108410
Local Authority Gateshead
Inspection number 288093
Inspection dates 11–12 December 2006
Reporting inspector Peter Harris HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Market Lane
School category	Community		Dunston, Gateshead
Age range of pupils	11–16		Tyne and Wear, NE11 9NX
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	0191 4606004
Number on roll (school)	781	Fax number	0191 4600295
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Rev Keith Teasdale
		Headteacher	Mr Simon Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2003		

Age group 11–16	Inspection dates 11–12 December 2006	Inspection number 288093
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than most secondary schools. The percentage of students eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Almost all students are of White British heritage. The proportion from minority ethnic groups and the proportion whose first language is not English are well below the national average. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with a statement of special educational need is well above average. The movement of students in and out of the school is greater than is the case nationally. The school has collaborative arrangements for post 16 courses with a local college and other schools. It became a Business and Enterprise Specialist school in September 2006 and is designated a full service extended school, with services to the community based in the school, which can also be used by students.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Kingsmeadow is a good school and there is no doubting the improvement it has made since the last inspection. One of its key strengths is that it successfully removes barriers that could prevent effective learning for many students. Students join the school with below average attainment and the school has identified particular weaknesses in their reading. Good guidance and support and a curriculum that engages and motivates learners mean that by the end of school most students make good progress. Standards at GCSE have continued to rise significantly and are at the national average. Students made good progress in Key Stage 3 in 2006 in mathematics and science, and satisfactory progress in English. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities make good progress as a result of the expert support and attention they receive.

The overall personal development of students and their well-being is good. The school cares for its students well. Attendance has improved steadily; it remains just below the national average but the school is doing all it can with good systems and support to improve it further. Relationships are good and there has been a sharp decline in exclusions. The behaviour of students is satisfactory. They behave with care towards each other and around the school. The school is calm, and the vast majority of students feel safe and part of the community.

Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some good and outstanding teaching but this is not yet the case consistently across the school. Occasionally, students are not involved enough in lessons and the marking of students' work is not always sufficiently regular and helpful. The curriculum is good; it has been developed well and includes vocational courses, which motivate students. The school's collaborative work with a local college and other schools is encouraging more students to stay in education after 16.

As a full service school, there are many links with agencies in the community, including health service professionals and police, which benefit the students. This is a community school that both supports, and receives support from, the local community. There are strong links to local workplace providers, helping to motivate students. The school's new specialism in business and enterprise is successfully connecting students to the business community.

The headteacher and the senior staff lead the school very effectively. They give close attention to raising standards and ensuring students are well cared for. Governors challenge the school effectively to enable it to improve, and parents and staff contribute usefully to ensure that the school evaluates itself accurately. Strengths and areas to improve are identified clearly. Leadership and staff have good capacity to ensure further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give greater emphasis throughout the school to improving literacy.
- Improve the quality and consistency of assessment of students.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The achievement of students is good overall. They make good progress and this is reflected in the satisfactory standards they attain. There is no doubting the improvement the school has made in this area. The school has well founded targets to challenge students. In 2006 in Key Stage 3, these were exceeded in science and mathematics, and the school met its targets for performance at GCSE.

Students join the school with below average standards particularly in reading. They make good progress and by the time students take their GCSE examinations in Key Stage 4, they reach the national average. The progress students make from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 and from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 has been good for the last three years overall and in 2006. The school is consistently adding value to students' achievement at a rate that is significantly higher than average.

The school recognises that standards at the end of Key Stage 3 have fluctuated and is taking relevant action to tackle this. Students made good progress in 2004; less so in 2005; and in 2006 students made good progress in mathematics and science and satisfactory progress in English.

The proportion of students attaining five higher grades in GCSE in 2006 was close to the national average and continued the steady and significant upward trend over the last five years. Results in mathematics improved and the proportions of students gaining a higher grade in English and mathematics also rose significantly in 2006. The number of students attaining five GCSE grades at any level also improved. The proportion of students leaving school without any GCSE examination passes has reduced. The school has reviewed the alternative curriculum it provides to ensure that all students can gain qualifications.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The overall personal development and well-being of students is good. There is a clear vision in the school concerning the inclusion of all students and it is proud to be one of the first schools to achieve the national Social Inclusion Award. The impact of this vision is seen in attitudes and relationships in the school, in the sharp decline in exclusions, and the continuing rise in attendance and achievement.

An important issue for the school has been to raise attendance. It has effective strategies in place, including contact with the home on the first day of absence, a panel of governors to monitor attendance, and rewards for good attendance. These policies have driven up attendance over the last four years. It has now reached the highest figure for the school, at just over 90%. This is still below the national average. The school is striving to improve further on these figures. Within the local authority, the school is seen as an example of good practice in its efforts to raise attendance.

The behaviour of the students is satisfactory in the classroom and around the school. They act in a responsible manner around the site, which at present is in the process of renovation and rebuilding. Importantly, there is an air of calm. The vast majority of students feel safe and part of the community. The students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

Students pride themselves, rightly, in their positive contribution to the wider community and they participate in activities which support the local and national charities that they have selected. As a full service school, there are many links with agencies in the community including health service professionals and police, which are benefiting the students. Within the school community, older students support younger students in a range of situations, especially through the prefects' system.

Students effectively develop skills that will be of use to them in the workplace. The new specialism of the school, which is only in place this term, linked with the outreach into the local community and the business community, is an emerging strength of the school. Students have wide access to a personal and social education course, which effectively provides them with life long social and economic skills. There are strong links to local workplace providers and a significant minority of students have access to various courses in the community. These courses not only enhance provision but also motivate students to achieve well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning in the school are satisfactory overall. In the core subjects, it is strongest in science with most students making significantly more progress than expected. English has some very good practice as a result of the department's effectively focused development planning. Teaching and learning are improving in mathematics as a result of a wide range of rigorous strategies that the school has put in place. There is also evidence of good practice in some of the foundation subjects.

Although the overall quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, it ranges from outstanding to, in a few lessons, inadequate. Broadly, teachers have good subject knowledge and the vast majority teach in their specialist area. In the best lessons, students are told what it is they are to learn, they work at a good pace and enjoy the good progress they make. In a Year 10 physical education lesson, students developed and improved skills that they will find useful in the workplace as a result of the school's effective use of the coaches provided by the local authority to support the school's Business and Enterprise status. In a small number of weaker lessons, planning does not cater well enough for the full range of students' capabilities and needs, which leads to students being less involved and not making the progress they could.

Assessment is also inconsistent. Most teachers are assiduous in regularly marking students' work and letting them know how to reach the next assessment level. However, some students explained that their work is not marked and assessed thoroughly enough,

an issue that the school recognises and is tackling. Students also would like to have more active involvement in self-assessment to help them understand better where and how they need to improve their work.

A strength of the school is the successful learning and progress of students with learning difficulties and disabilities and those not fluent in English. These students receive expert specialist help which enables them to achieve well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum of the school and the range of activities it offers to students are good. This is an important improvement since the last inspection.

At Key Stage 3, students study a broad and balanced range of subjects. Curriculum developments at Key Stage 4 are a major factor in improved standards and achievement. The 'Pathways' system includes increased vocational opportunities and has successfully increased the engagement of students in their learning. This has led to improvements in overall examination success. Very effective personalised programmes are in place for vulnerable learners. These succeed because of the wide range of opportunities offered and the good support that the school gives to the consultations that take place between the parents and students concerned. This has resulted in more students being engaged in their learning, their improved health and attendance, and an increase in qualifications acquired by the less academic students.

The school provides extended opportunities in its 14–19 curriculum. This, and improving standards and achievement, and the collaboration with other schools and with the college, is seeing an increasing number move into further education or employment with training.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school's care, guidance and support for students are good, making it a popular choice for parents. All requirements for child protection are firmly in place and staff are very alert to any symptoms of distress. The good quality arrangements for the school to deal with the rare incidents of bullying or harassment contribute strongly to the generally calm and harmonious atmosphere. The role of form teacher is highly valued within the school, and is a key and effective part of the education and care arrangements. It helps the school to achieve its aim that every pupil should be treated as an individual and be fully included in all aspects of the work of the school. This is reflected in the absence of permanent exclusions, and the drastic reduction of fixed-term exclusions, over recent years.

The school provides good support for students with learning difficulties through the use of teaching assistants in the classroom and the careful recording of the progress of individuals. Very good relationships exist with external bodies and parents, so that this, and other information regarding these students, is shared and built upon.

When students join the school, a range of assessments is used to place students in the appropriate sets. As a result of the school's specialist business and enterprise status, a key strength is the provision of information about Year 9 option choices, the different 'Pathways' that students may follow and the eventual career opportunities that exist after students reach the age of 16. The school is not complacent and continues to build upon its many good arrangements for guiding and supporting students so that they improve their achievement.

There are extensive links with primary schools that enable students to make a smooth transition to secondary school. Well-developed programmes for helping students to choose optional subjects and make career choices are firmly in place. The extensive range of contacts with local businesses has been well cemented by the school's specialist Business and Enterprise status and underpins successful work experience.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in helping the school to raise standards and to support students are good. The headteacher provides a strong focus on raising standards, fostering high quality care and meeting the needs of all students. Since the last inspection, decisive action has been taken to improve the school in all critical areas of its work. As a result, the school successfully removes barriers that have the potential to prevent effective learning for many students.

Governors, parents and staff are all involved in accurate self-evaluation. This is further strengthened by effective collaboration with the local authority and the school improvement partner. Governors have a good grasp of the crucial issues that face the school and they provide effective strategic challenge to senior leaders. All are committed to providing a high quality, valued community resource. This includes a complete rebuild of the school, the first phase of which is due to open in three months time. In close collaboration with the local college, appropriate study opportunities beyond age 16 have been established.

The headteacher and two deputy headteachers work very closely to ensure that the school runs well. They are well supported by a committed team of staff. Improved recruitment and training is leading to increasingly effective middle management. As a consequence, capacity to improve further is good and has been enhanced by the recent successful business and enterprise specialist status bid. Monitoring systems are good, although assessment data and guidance for improvement need to be used more consistently. Vetting procedures for adults working in school are in place. Resources are shrewdly and efficiently managed. The school has surplus places but provides satisfactory value for money.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	4
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Kingsmeadow Community Comprehensive School

Market Lane

Dunston

Gateshead

Tyne and Wear

NE11 9NX

11 December 2006

Dear Students

I would like to begin by thanking you for the welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school, and especially for the conversations we had about your view of life at school.

I also want to thank the many parents who responded to me. Almost every one was pleased with the work the school does. You told us you enjoyed school and felt safe; one concern some of you had was that your experience in lessons varies more than you would like.

You go to a school that is well led by the headteacher. The teachers and other staff work hard to improve the school. They receive good help from the governors. Many aspects of your school have improved. Attendance has gone up. Examination results in GCSE are close to the average we find nationally. The school cares for you well.

The school now specialises in business and enterprise and although this is very new it is helping you to have links with local businesses.

We think you behave in a satisfactory way and look out for each other. We think it would be even better if more of you got fully involved in your work in lessons, for example by asking and answering questions.

There are three things we are asking the school to do to help it improve.

One is to improve literacy in the school. This means the school taking more care about the materials you are asked to read. It also means teachers being more demanding about the answers accepted in class and the presentation of writing in books. You can play your part by taking pride in your writing and in giving longer and more interesting answers to questions.

The second is to improve the assessment of your work. This means regular marking and guidance from teachers to help you make progress in your work. You told us you would welcome the chance to assess your work too, so we hope you will get involved.

The third and final area to improve is attendance. It has got better steadily. But you can help the school, and of course help yourself, by attending every day and ensuring that you do not fall behind.

Our thanks again and we wish you a happy and successful time at Kingsmeadow.

Peter Harris

Her Majesty's Inspector