



Kirkbie Kendal School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112427
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289284
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector Andrew Johnson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Lound Road
School category	Foundation		Kendal, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	11–18		LA9 7EQ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01539 727422
Number on roll (school)	990	Fax number	01539 729243
Number on roll (6th form)	180		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Nicola Crierie
		Headteacher	Mr Phil Hyman
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	7–8 March 2007	289284

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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

Kirkbie Kendal School is an average-sized comprehensive school with specialist Business and Enterprise status. The economy of the area is based on its rural character. Much employment is available in the tourism and hospitality industries but wages are relatively low. A very small percentage of the students take free school meals; well below the national average. Very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a small minority have English as an additional language. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is slightly below average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school with an outstanding sixth form. The school gives very good value for money. This judgement matches the school's own view of its effectiveness.

Good teaching and a particularly well thought out curriculum lead to standards that have steadily risen over time. The headteacher and senior staff set challenging targets that are usually met. For example, the recent disappointing achievement rates of boys are much improved. The specialist college status for business and enterprise has been very well cultivated to establish an outstanding range of business and community links. This has enabled students to gain a wider range of work experience and greater understanding of the world of work. Students' behaviour is good and a new policy has been introduced to improve attitudes of students even further. There are some inconsistencies in the application of this policy by teachers. This school is an inclusive community and students are rarely subject to exclusions. Parents wholeheartedly support the school and are very positive about the teaching and learning it provides. Vulnerable groups of students are well supported; however, the use of individual learning plans to set targets and improve the consistency of support is not sufficiently established. This means that for a small number of students there is a lack of focus on what the objectives are and how the school will help them to achieve them. Sixth form learners take responsibility for leading the student community and mentoring younger students. Students participate in extensive charity work that makes a contribution to both the local and international community.

The senior leaders have managed change very effectively and this has resulted in considerable improvements. As a result, the school has an outstanding capacity to improve. The school's ambition to improve even further is shared by all staff and governors. There is some inconsistency in the work of some middle management where greater rigour is needed. As a result, the school has introduced several initiatives, related to learning and support, which have yet to have maximum impact.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form provides an outstanding quality of education. Learners have very mature attitudes to their work and are confident and well motivated. Almost all learners complete the courses they begin. Teaching is excellent, learners make very good progress and standards are above average. The quality of care is very good and learners receive accurate and impartial careers advice. The curriculum offers a broad range of A-level courses together with some very successful vocational courses. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding and ensure that there is clear direction and very close monitoring of performance.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure managers at all levels rigorously and consistently implement school improvement initiatives and policies across all departments

- Improve the use of individual plans used to support vulnerable groups.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Achievement and standards are good. Students enter the school with average levels of attainment and gain GCSE grades that are well above average. Following particularly disappointing boys' results in progress tests in 2005, the school established a wide range of measures for improvement. As a result, in 2006 there was a marked improvement in boys' progress and standards. Achievement in English, mathematics, science and design technology are particularly impressive. Senior managers recognise that achievement could be better in a small minority of subjects, including French and business communications and have taken significant action to bring about improvement. Students maintain the same levels of progress in Key Stage 3 and 4. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities reach standards which are good because of the effective support they receive. The small number of students for whom English is not a first language make generally good progress. Achievement in the sixth form is outstanding. Learners' progress accelerates during their time in the sixth form and standards are very high, where boys and girls achieve equally well. There is particularly high achievement in English, business studies and information and communication technology (ICT).

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of students is good and this has a considerable impact on their learning. Students enjoy school and attendance is above the national average. Very few students are excluded from this school.

Sporting opportunities provided in lessons and by sports teams promote physical fitness very well. The balance and variety of food offered at lunchtime has improved and is now good. Students understand the impact that diet has on their health.

Students develop good skills in literacy, numeracy and the use of computers. Very few students leave school without going into higher or further education or employment. Links with local primary schools are good, ensuring extremely smooth transitions for students. A very high proportion of parents have positive views about the school. Students told inspectors that they feel safe and know which adults they can turn to for support. Bullying is rare and when it does happen, it is dealt with effectively. There is a well established elected school council that has led to improvements in the facilities available for students. Most students are well behaved and considerate around the building, although they are sometimes a little boisterous when waiting to enter classrooms. Students take part in a wide range of clubs and activities both at lunchtime and after school. The monitoring of the numbers and diversity of students attending

such activities is not done in sufficient detail to allow staff to measure trends and success.

Assemblies give students good opportunities for spiritual development. They visit a range of different places of worship and become aware of the importance of sexual health and the effects of drug abuse in a moral context. The development of understanding international cultures is good, although measures to improve students' understanding of the diversity of Britain need to continue to be developed.

In the sixth form the personal development and well-being of students are outstanding, not only because of their excellent academic achievement but also because of their participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Teaching and learning is good in the main school and outstanding in the sixth form. Students enjoy their lessons, particularly when they have opportunities to work collaboratively and carry out peer assessment. There are useful displays of work in classrooms allowing students to identify what they have to achieve at different levels. A wide range of opportunities are offered to students to assess their own learning; this is particularly successful in some subject areas such as design technology. In the best lessons there is both a crisp start with teachers clearly explaining their expectations of the class and a good end with teachers and students deciding if objectives had been achieved. Teachers mark work promptly and accurately however, in a few cases written feedback is not sufficiently detailed to allow students to understand what they need to improve. Inspectors agree with the school's self-evaluation that it should further develop the use of ICT to support learning and that the whole-school approach to the use of the library and using other sources of information needs to be further developed. Teachers in the sixth form are particularly adept at using an approach that acts as a bridge between school and the more mature world of work or higher education.

Teaching is well planned and gifted and talented students are often given more challenging tasks. Vulnerable groups of students and students with learning difficulties are particularly well supported in lessons. However, individual learning plans are not always used effectively. Not all of them bring together all the aspects of teaching, assessment and support that the school provides as well as they might. Targets set for students need to be sufficiently specific and measurable.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is outstanding. It provides a very broad but balanced range of courses. In Key Stage 4, students have access to both academic and vocational courses. The school works with a large number of partner schools and the local college to extend its offer further. The improved progress of boys in Key Stage 4 is partly attributable to the more flexible approach to curriculum choices at the end of Key stage 3. More able students are offered GCSE statistics and modular science courses are now in place. Beyond the taught curriculum there is a very good range of popular extra-curricular activities. The sixth form offers a large number of academic courses and a number of successful vocational programmes. Plans are in place to extend the curriculum even further to ensure there are appropriate pathways for students following the new courses in Key Stage 4. Students have greatly benefited from the school's specialist status in terms of the number of business related courses available and the development of the skills that will ensure their future economic well-being.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements to track students' academic progress are particularly strong. The school has good procedures for safeguarding students. Health and safety requirements are adhered to and risk assessments carried out where appropriate. Parents of students with learning difficulties are very complimentary about the work of learning support assistants. Form meetings at the beginning of the day are used to check on the progress of students and encourage personal development and well-being. There is variation in the effectiveness of form meetings, with a small minority of students wasting time or causing low level disruption until they are seen on an individual basis by their tutor. The school has a very inclusive ethos where exclusions from school are avoided wherever possible. In cases of poor behaviour, students are asked to work in small groups under close supervision. Where possible they are then reintegrated into their classes; unfortunately a small number of students are referred on a frequent basis. There are a small but growing number of students for whom English is an additional language and resources for these students are limited. Guidance and support is outstanding in the sixth form because of the good relationships that develop between learners and teachers. Careers guidance is good and learners are enabled to make very informed choices about future employment or education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership and management are good. The senior management team provide very effective impetus for positive change. The school has improved significantly in recent years and now provides a very supportive and challenging environment for both staff and students. The leadership of the sixth form is outstanding and has led to year-on-year improvements in achievement and significant curriculum development. Sixth form learners feel very positive about the school and particularly value the high quality support they receive. There is some inconsistency in the way in which school policies and improvement initiatives are applied. Departmental planning varies in effectiveness. In the best departments, milestone targets are set and measured. Accurate data is readily available and used well by managers to analyse performance. For example, in design and technology, the use of data is extended even further to provide a more useful analysis of individual students' progress and targets. The self-evaluation process enables managers to accurately describe the main strengths and weaknesses of the school and provides a firm foundation for the development plan. The reasons why achievements are so high in the sixth form are not always identified so do not allow the rest of the school to learn from its success. Governors provide good support to senior managers and the financial management of the school is very strong. Recent developments to the school buildings and facilities have made a very positive contribution to its success. The school has successfully tackled most of the issues raised at the last inspection. The small numbers of issues that are proving to be most difficult to improve, such as the achievement of boys, are showing very positive signs of improvement.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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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	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	1
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	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	1

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
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	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	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

Kirkbie Kendal School

Lound Road

Kendal

Cumbria

LA9 7EQ

10 March 2007

Dear Students,

Thank you for the welcome you gave to the inspectors and for the valuable contribution you made to the inspection. I am writing to summarise what we said about your school in the report. There are many good points.

- Your school is a good school with an outstanding sixth form.
- Teaching is good and helps you make good progress.
- You told us you feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- There is little bullying or bad behaviour and there is good help and advice available.
- The headteacher has a strong team of senior staff who are helping him make really positive changes.

To improve further, the school needs to take the following actions:

- some of the changes that have been introduced need to be carefully measured to see if they have had the same effect in all the departments;
- for a small number of students, the school needs to make sure that individual learning plans set realistic targets that closely match students' needs.

You have every reason to be proud of your school and we hope that you continue to work hard to make it even better.

Best wishes

Andrew Johnson

Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools