

Kirkbie Kendal School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112427
Local Authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	337932
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Susan Brown HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1050
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nicola Crierie
Headteacher	Mr Phil Hyman
Date of previous school inspection	7 March 2007
School address	Lound Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 7EQ
Telephone number	01539 727422
Fax number	01539 729243
Email address	p.hyman@kirkbiekendal.cumbria.sch.uk

Age group	11–18
Inspection dates	10–11 November 2009
Inspection number	337932

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

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

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 43 lessons and held meetings with governors, members of staff, groups of students and a representative from the South Lakes Federation. They observed the school's work and looked at a range of documentation including performance information, internal monitoring reports and governors' minutes. A sample of students' work was also scrutinised along with 274 parental questionnaires and the sample of student questionnaires submitted by the school.

- the effectiveness with which the school identifies those students who under-achieve and uses this evidence to intervene to effect improvement
- how teachers and other staff use the school's assessment and tracking evidence when planning lessons so that the needs of all students are consistently met, ensuring they make progress commensurate with their capabilities and starting points
- the effectiveness of provision and whether it meets the needs and aspirations of all students, including those in the sixth form
- the effectiveness of senior leaders in monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions taken to bring about improvement.

Information about the school

This average size comprehensive school is situated in the town of Kendal and serves both the town and the surrounding rural area. 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. Students are almost exclusively White British. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly below average. The school has a specialism in business and enterprise and is a founder member of the South Lakes Federation of schools and the Kendal Community Partnership. Sixth-form provision is offered sometimes in collaboration with other providers. The school has received many awards including Eco-school and the Princess Diana Memorial Award for students.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Kirkbie Kendal is a good school. Students make good progress and standards of attainment are higher than at the time of the last inspection. Senior leaders responded promptly and effectively to a decline in standards in 2008. They set challenging targets for attainment and secured the commitment of middle leaders to achieving them. They prioritised improvements in teaching and learning and embarked upon a major programme of professional development for all staff. At the same time they introduced more rigorous performance and line management procedures. The accuracy and usefulness of the school's assessment and tracking system were improved so that students at risk of underachieving could be identified and appropriate support and intervention provided. Provisional examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 in 2009 show significant improvement. Similar improvements in teaching, learning, leadership and management have been made in the sixth form but the full impact cannot yet be seen in examination results. Senior leaders recognise that the time is right for more middle leaders to take on responsibility for the further development of those initiatives that have brought this improvement about. The school's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

The quality of teaching is good overall and this has contributed to improvements in students' achievement. Teachers have good subject knowledge, show genuine enthusiasm and are able to motivate and enthuse students. In good lessons, assessment and tracking information is used well to plan tasks that meet the needs of all students and ensure that they make good progress. However, there are lessons where this is not the case and students' interest wanes. Furthermore, students' misunderstandings are not always picked up and corrected quickly enough.

Students enjoy attending this school and they are proud to do so. They work hard, approach their tasks with enthusiasm and demonstrate sustained commitment to their studies. Their good behaviour and positive attitudes towards each other and their work create a positive climate for learning. They are keen to take on responsibility and are influential in shaping important aspects of school life. They participate in an extensive range of enrichment, community and charitable activities. However, they have limited opportunities to engage with groups of people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise standards of attainment and improve rates of progress further:
- - ensure that teachers consistently use the school's assessment and tracking

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

information when planning lessons so that the needs of all students are met

- - improve the use of assessment during lessons to ensure that misconceptions are identified and corrected
- - consolidate and build upon recent improvements in teaching and leadership and management in the sixth form.
- Ensure that more middle managers take on responsibility for the leadership, management and development of school improvement initiatives.
- Provide opportunities for students to engage with a range of groups from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, including those not represented in the immediate community.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The large majority of students approach their learning with positive attitudes. They are enthusiastic and keen to do well. They demonstrate sustained commitment to their studies.

Students enter the school with broadly average levels of attainment. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 declined in 2008 but remained broadly average. The majority of students made satisfactory progress, but girls and some groups of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities did not. Provisional results for 2009 indicate a marked improvement with 71% of students gaining five or more good GCSE results. Furthermore, the proportion of students gaining five or more good passes including English and mathematics, which also declined in 2008, has improved. Almost all groups of students are now making good progress and some are making very good progress. Purposeful and targeted intervention ensures that students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress.

The majority of students say that they feel safe in school. Incidents of bullying are rare: students know who to turn to and are confident that staff will deal promptly and effectively with any concerns. In most lessons behaviour is at least good. Students have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and there are high levels of participation rates in sporting activities. They have impacted positively on children's lives in South Africa by fund-raising for a crèche. The school has used its specialism extremely well: students' enterprise skills and their understanding of the world of work and financial literacy are well developed. Students respond well on the many occasions when they are required to work independently or collaboratively but such opportunities are not available consistently across the school. Attendance is above average and students are punctual to lessons. Students' spiritual, moral and social development is strong. They understand the difference between right and wrong. They are able to consider and relate to the experiences, values and opinions of others but have limited opportunities to engage with people from backgrounds not represented in the local community.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching and learning is predominantly good although there is more good teaching in the sixth form than in the main school. A small number of outstanding lessons were seen. In these lessons teachers used their subject expertise and knowledge of students' capabilities to challenge students' thinking and push their learning forward. A very small number of inadequate lessons were also seen. In these lessons the management of student behaviour was weak and the low level disruption caused by a minority of students was allowed to disrupt the learning of the others.

Where good teaching was seen, information from the school's increasingly detailed and robust assessment system was used well to identify what students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities needed to learn next, and to provide well-matched tasks. Teachers provided very clear explanations and adopted a brisk pace. As a result students made good progress. In a history lesson it was clear that students were developing an understanding of the feudal system when they were guided by their teacher to compare it to the hierarchy within the school. Teachers have high expectations of students' literacy skills across the curriculum. For example, one class was being helped to express their ideas and understanding in writing by improving their understanding of what makes a full sentence.

In other lessons, the pace of learning was slower and less time was given to pursue independent activities or collaborative work. This led to some students losing interest.

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

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Teachers did not use assessment information, including that about students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, well enough to match tasks sufficiently closely to students' varying learning needs. As a result not all of them made consistently good progress.

The curriculum meets students' needs and aspirations well. It supports good academic and personal outcomes. Productive links with primary schools enable students to settle quickly in Year 7. Nevertheless, several parents commented that they would have appreciated feedback during the first term on how their children were doing academically. The good range of courses at Key Stage 4 includes alternative and vocational courses provided through the school's links with its partners, including the local college. Students receive good advice when making their choices. A number of students have a programme that is specially tailored to their needs. Throughout the school personal, social, health and citizenship education is good. The school's specialism has a strong influence across the curriculum and on specialist days. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are well developed. The good range of sporting and other extra-curricular activities is extremely popular with students.

The school provides well-organised support for all students. It works well with outside agencies to support the most vulnerable. Pastoral leaders and form tutors know their students well. The effective care, guidance and support provided by the school make a major contribution to students' good personal development and academic progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders have secured a whole school commitment to raising standards by improving further the quality of provision. Much has been done to improve the skills of senior and middle leaders since the last inspection. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and there are well targeted actions to improve performance. Senior leaders and managers evaluate the quality of teaching and learning regularly. However, the school does not yet analyse information sufficiently well to provide a clear view of the quality of teaching experienced by different groups of students.

Senior leaders are supported well by members of the governing body who understand the school's strengths and recognise those areas requiring further improvement. They hold the school to account and demonstrate a clear understanding of the steps taken to

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

halt the decline in standards and bring about sustained improvement. The school works effectively with its partners and other agencies to enhance the curriculum offered to all students and support those who are vulnerable.

The large majority of parents are supportive of the school's work and consider that their children enjoy school and feel safe in it. A few parents expressed a need for more regular information about their child's progress and ways in which they could support this.

The school's safeguarding procedures are generally good although it recognises that it needs to do more to ensure that students understand the issues relating to safety when using the internet. The school promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination effectively. The majority of students including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. Senior leaders understand the context of the school well. They have identified opportunities within the curriculum and have taken a range of relevant actions to promote community cohesion. However, the school is not yet systematically evaluating the impact of its work in this area. The school recognises that it needs to do more to ensure that students have a greater range of opportunities to engage with people from other religions and minority ethnic communities.

The school provides good value for money. Outcomes for individuals and groups of students are good and financial management is strong.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

Over the last two years standards in the sixth form have declined but remained broadly

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

in line with national averages. Rates of progress, although satisfactory, have slowed. In 2009, progress in English, art, law and technology was stronger than in other subjects and students did well in the sports diploma. Decisive action is being taken to bring about improvement. Teaching and learning and leadership and management of the sixth form are now good. The impact of these improvements is yet to be seen in examination results but the school's increasingly accurate tracking information indicates that current standards and rates of progress in the sixth form are improving.

The teaching seen was invariably good and occasionally outstanding. Teachers demonstrated very good subject knowledge, provided very clear explanations, motivated students and gave due emphasis to preparation for examinations. However, in some lessons they did too much of the work so that students who were aiming for high grades were not sufficiently responsible for their own learning. Elsewhere, teachers did not pick up and correct misconceptions quickly enough. Students have positive attitudes to learning but they are not always encouraged to use their initiative and develop independence.

The sixth-form curriculum offers a wide range of academic courses and students appreciate the range of options. There are also National Diploma courses in sport and health and social care and the take up of vocational provision is increasing. The curriculum is enriched by life skills and personal effectiveness programmes which are appreciated by students and promote opportunities for them to contribute to the school and wider community. Students receive good care, guidance and support from academic and pastoral staff.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	2

Views of parents and carers

The very large majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire were pleased with their child's experiences in the school. They indicated that their child enjoyed school and received good teaching. They were confident that their child was safe in school and indicated that leadership and management of the school was good. A very small minority of parents commented that the school did not give them enough information about the progress their child was making and how they could support their child's learning.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Kirkbie Kendal 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 274 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1050 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	97	35	159	58	7	3	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	109	40	159	58	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	70	26	160	58	30	11	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	78	28	162	59	13	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	69	25	178	65	10	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	59	22	157	57	39	14	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	22	177	65	25	9	1	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)	87	32	156	57	4	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	85	31	157	57	16	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	72	26	158	58	27	10	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	18	157	57	33	12	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	89	32	157	57	8	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	107	39	150	55	7	3	2	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">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



12 November 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Kirkbie Kendal School, Kendal LA9 7EQ

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you for the manner in which you welcomed us to the school and particularly those students who shared their views of the school with us in meetings and through the pupil questionnaire. The report is now complete and I would like to share our findings with you.

Kirkbie Kendal is a good school. Standards dipped in 2008 but the headteacher, governors and staff acted quickly to remedy this situation. They made improvements in teaching and learning, in the curriculum and in the way that staff monitor your progress and support those of you who need additional help. They also set challenging targets for themselves and for you to meet. Now, almost all of you are making good progress and the standards of attainment you are reaching are higher than they were when inspectors last visited the school in 2007.

You told us that you enjoy attending this school and are proud to do so. We could see that you work hard, approach your tasks with enthusiasm and demonstrate sustained commitment to your studies. Your good behaviour, positive attitudes and keenness to take on responsibility make an important contribution to the success of the school.

We have asked Mr Hyman, the governors and the staff to:

- make sure that all teachers use the assessment information that they have about you so that in all lessons you undertake activities which meet your needs
- involve more staff in leading school improvement initiatives
- provide opportunities for you to meet and work with people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Thank you again for your help during the inspection and to those of you who completed the student questionnaire. We have taken very careful account of your views in completing this report. Please accept our very best wishes for the future in your studies.

Yours sincerely

Susan Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.