

Samuel King's School

Church Road, Alston, Cumbria, CA9 3QU

Inspection dates 14–15 May 2013

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Inadequate | 4 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not yet of a consistently good enough standard to ensure that all groups of students make the progress of which they are capable.
- The gap in attainment between English and mathematics is too great.
- Students in receipt of the pupil premium funding (the extra funding for particular groups of students) have yet to fully close the gap in attainment against their peers.
- Senior leaders and governors have not yet analysed fully how the school's use of the pupil premium funding is helping to raise attainment for those who receive it.
- There is some low level disruption from a very small minority of students.
- The students' learning behaviours, including their personal attributes of self-initiated learning, interest and motivation, need to develop further in order to help them improve their overall levels of attainment and progress.
- The citizenship curriculum does too little to promote the students' greater cultural awareness.

The school has the following strengths

- The proportion of students gaining good grades in GCSE rose by 12% last year.
- The gaps in the attainment of different groups of students are closing.
- The school has consistently met the government floor standards.
- There is some good quality teaching which enthuse and motivate students, and helps them to make good progress in their learning.
- The students' work is marked regularly.
- The students' behaviour in and around the school, including mixing with others at break and lunchtime, and in showing respect for the building and the resources they use in lessons is good.
- The headteacher, ably supported by the governors, has a clear vision for school improvement.
- The school links well with external partners, with both staff and students benefitting from these links.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 part lessons, which included all teachers, 13 in total, and some teaching assistants. A member of the middle management team joined an inspector for one lesson observation, and was observed giving feedback to the teacher seen. All teachers were offered and almost all received feedback from inspectors.
- The lead inspector looked at the Ofsted on-line questionnaire (Parent View), prior to and during the inspection. In total, there were 30 on-line responses in addition to one letter from a parent; together, all were evidenced as part of this inspection. The collective findings from these responses were summarised with senior staff, and were briefly shared at the formal feedback meeting at the end of the inspection.
- A range of documents was read and meetings held with the headteacher and other senior staff, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, and a local authority officer. The lead inspector also spoke with two external partners; one was a local registered charity providing vocational training and the second, a local authority academy, which has been providing professional support for the school since the previous inspection.
- During lesson observations, inspectors listened to a small number of students reading aloud to their class, in addition to looking at a significant number of the students' work books.
- Inspectors also spoke with students and staff during lessons.
- Inspectors read and evidenced 15 paper-based questionnaires returned by staff at the school.

Inspection team

Brian Blake, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Julie McGrane

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Samuel King's School is significantly smaller than the average sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students who need extra help with their education, through school action, is average. The proportion of students who need more specialised support, namely, those at school action plus and those who are disabled or have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals, those who have been in the care of the local authority for more than six months, and those whose parents are currently serving in the armed forces, are eligible for additional funding called the pupil premium. The proportion of these students currently in school is 6.3%, which is lower than average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Five Year 10 and five Year 11 students, attend the Appleby Heritage Centre, a local registered charity, for one day a week to study for a National Vocational Qualification Level 2 (NVQ L2) in engineering operations.
- Following on very quickly from the previous inspection, the school was linked to The Queen Katherine School in Kendal, and since then has developed links and support structures for ongoing professional development of staff. Plans are now well advanced to develop these links more formally, so that from as early as possible in the next academic year, Samuel King's School will become a sponsored academy.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to at least a consistently good standard by:
 - ensuring that teachers talk less and plan lessons which challenge individual and group thinking and discussion rather than the completion of tasks
 - giving more time to students to initiate different aspects of their learning through more open-ended tasks
 - ensuring that the students have time to re-visit, refine and re-draft any work, particularly homework, about which the teacher has provided written or oral feedback
 - creating a learning environment, with high levels of focused and differentiated activities that enthuse and motivate the students to learn
 - ensuring that teachers avoid too many interruptions of the students as they are working in order that they maximise their working time in all lessons.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the governing body knows how the extra funding received through the pupil premium is benefitting those students in receipt of it, and whether there are other or more effective alternatives available
 - ensuring that more detailed information about the school's use of the pupil premium, including the impact it has on improving standards, is published on the school website

- ensuring that teachers receive fair pay for the quality of their teaching and the resultant standards that their students achieve
 - ensuring that the headteacher and governors continue to robustly challenge teaching which requires improvement because the students in those lessons are not making the progress of which they are capable
 - evaluating the impact of the school's early entry policy on the students' attainment in those GCSE examinations taken early.
- Improve the quality of the citizenship curriculum by planning more opportunities for the students to develop their cultural appreciation and understanding of different ethnic and faith groups, how the law affects them and their families, their civil rights, and the role and place of public services such as the police, fire and health services.
- Continue the focus on improving students' overall literacy skills, especially in reading for those who are below the standard expected for their age by:
- devising clearer whole-school strategies, which help develop and reinforce reading for different purposes in all subjects
 - developing further the students' phonological awareness as an aid to them making more rapid improvement in their reading.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although the gaps in attainment are closing between different groups of students, and overall progress is better now than at the time of the previous inspection, neither has been sustained for a long enough period of time to show that the students' achievement is any better than requires improvement.
- This is compounded by the school systems for tracking the performance of its students, which are still at such an early stage of development that it is not possible to be absolutely confident in the reliability of the projected performance.
- Despite the 12% increase in the number of students gaining good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics last year, there remains a significant difference between the students' performance in these two core subjects. Mathematics still lags too far behind English for all groups of students, including those in receipt of the pupil premium, those at school action plus, and those with a statement of special educational needs.
- The total average point score for last year's Year 11 students in receipt of the pupil premium was 408.3, compared to 495.8 for the rest of the year group. Although still too great, the gap has been closing since the previous inspection despite the very small numbers of pupil premium students having a far greater influence of the figures than is seen in much larger secondary schools. Since the start of this academic year, the percentage of pupil premium students underperforming against their peers has reduced by almost half, although there are still a few students who need to make more rapid improvement.
- The school has an early entry policy for students in a small number of GCSE subjects. This policy is based on the rationale of providing greater curricular and accreditation opportunities for the students because the school is significantly smaller than the average sized secondary school, and is, therefore, limited in what it can offer. While this policy has some merits, and is providing extended accreditation opportunities for some students, neither the senior leaders nor governors have evaluated fully its impact on the attainment and progress of the students who take early entry GCSEs.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- While there is some good quality teaching, it is not yet consistent enough across the school.
- Some teaching enthuses and captures the interest of the students. Where it is best, teachers ask questions that make the students think, at a pace which allows all abilities to make good progress in their learning.
- In contrast to this, some teaching still places too great an emphasis on completing lesson tasks rather than on developing the students' ability to gain greater knowledge and understanding of an important idea or concept. Where there is teaching of this type, a succession of tasks occupy the students, repeat their previous learning and do not ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable. As a result, teachers' questioning lacks the challenge necessary for students to think for themselves, and thus fails to promote the students' positive behaviour towards learning and their interest in the subject.
- Some teaching needs to improve so that there is less teacher talk, more opportunities for individual sustained work, and lesson content that challenges the different abilities in the class.
- Although written feedback from teachers to students in workbooks has improved since the previous inspection, it is not always used to best effect. At its best, teachers provide the students with a very clear idea of the quality of their work, what was good and what needs to be improved. However, there is little to show that the students are given time to re-visit this work in order to re-draft, refine and generally improve it as an aid to their learning.
- Although there is a whole-school literacy policy, it is not yet making a big enough impact across

the whole curriculum. This means that there are not enough opportunities for the students to read for different purposes across the full curriculum. Also, the absence of strategies to promote rapid improvements in reading, especially in phonics, is affecting the levels of literacy seen throughout the curriculum.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

- The students' behaviour in and around the school, including mixing with other students, showing respect for the building and the resources being used in lessons is good for the vast majority. However, a few students need to improve their behaviour in lessons by showing a greater level of respect to their peers and the class teacher.
- Those aspects of the students' behaviour, which relate to their ability to develop and use their personal skills, such as self-initiated learning, are more limited and need to improve. In lessons where teaching really enthuses and involves students in their learning, challenging them to think and make decisions for themselves, the students have very positive attitudes to their work and almost all make good progress. Across the school, however, there are too few opportunities for the students to consistently practise, develop and refine these important learning skills regularly in all lessons.
- The overwhelming majority of teachers manage and organise the students effectively in lessons.
- Action to address incidents of very challenging behaviour shown by a small minority of students is effective.
- The overall number of more serious behavioural incidents that are formally recorded is low. There are few incidents of bullying, and none of a racial or homophobic nature.
- Overall attendance and punctuality to lessons are good.

The leadership and management are good

- Since the previous inspection there has been a change of headteacher. Although only in post for just over a year, he has developed very positive working relationships with staff, students, governors, parents and the local authority.
- The headteacher recognised very quickly that significant change was needed if the school was to address fully the weaknesses identified during the previous inspection of the school. In devising an effective school development plan, which outlines clearly the key areas for further improvement, the headteacher has been able to ensure that a vision for continuous improvement is easily understood by staff and governors. This also means that senior leaders and governors know what the school needs to do to improve further. As a result, the significant weaknesses in leadership and management identified in the previous report have now been successfully addressed. The restructuring of leadership roles and responsibilities, following the previous inspection, has been successful.
- While improved leadership and management, especially monitoring, evaluating and challenging weak provision have clearly underpinned the 2012 improvement in the proportion of students gaining good GCSE grades, the headteacher and governors recognise that the school has more to do to consolidate and improve further in order to become a good school in every respect.
- Staff have responded positively to the actions taken by the headteacher and other senior managers, and have embraced the range of external support provided by a partner school, The Queen Katherine School. This targeted support, especially for those with management responsibilities, has been effective. Middle leaders now have a clearer sense of their individual and collective responsibilities, especially in relation to improving the quality of teaching as an aid to improving the attainment and progress of all students.
- The local authority has supported the school in a way that is helpful to staff and governors. It is aware of the ongoing areas which need to improve further if the school is to achieve a good

overall effectiveness grade for its quality of provision.

- The curriculum of the school offers students a broad range of learning experiences, and is enhanced further for those Year 10 and Year 11 students who are working with the Appleby Heritage Centre on NVQ L2 engineering operations qualifications. However, the citizenship curriculum across the school is limited in offering the students more varied opportunities to develop their cultural appreciation and awareness, especially of how others live and work, such as different ethnic and faith groups, and how the law, the rights of individuals and public services affect their own and other communities.
- The Parent View results show that the overwhelming majority of parents are positive about the school's provision for their children.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory regulations.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The role of governors has progressed significantly since the previous inspection. The delegation of shared responsibilities between full and sub-committees is ensuring that there is good coverage of the key improvement aspects for the school, and that governors are well informed about how well the school is doing; this applies, in particular, to the quality of teaching. The governors take their role very seriously, and regular contact between the Chair, vice- chair and senior managers is helping to build positive relations between the staff and the governing body. Governors and senior staff are able to show that those pupils in receipt of extra funding, the pupil premium, make suitable progress against other groups in the school, with the gap in attainment closing. However, details of how this funding has been used, and how it is helping these students to improve further, have not yet been made sufficiently clear on the school's website. While over the past two years the governing body has robustly tackled the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection, they have given less attention to the performance management of teachers. This means, therefore, that governors are not in a secure position to challenge fully the progress of teachers through the pay scale, based on their performance in the classroom. Although the headteacher has taken a lead in this area, the Chair and vice-chair recognise that this is now an area that needs far greater attention by the full governing body.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 112378 |
| Local authority | Cumbria |
| Inspection number | 399671 |

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

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| Type of school | Secondary |
| School category | Foundation |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 157 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Andy Morsman |
| Headteacher | Ian Johnson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 8 February 2012 |
| Telephone number | 01434 381236 |
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