

Kingsmead School

Kings Avenue, Hednesford, Cannock, Staffordshire WS12 1DH

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- A new headteacher has brought energy and ambition to the school. It has improved rapidly since she took up her post in September 2017. Together with other leaders, she has established a more open culture and higher expectations among pupils and staff.
- New leaders have brought about much improvement in a short space of time. However, too many aspects of teaching, including the use of assessment, and pupil outcomes still require improvement.
- Teachers do not always expect pupils to achieve well enough, think for themselves or write at sufficient length. The work set for some pupils, including in mathematics and English, is too easy.
- Some pupils do not make enough progress during their time at school. GCSE results have been weaker than they should be. While progress rates are improving for most pupils, many still lag behind where they should be at their age.
- Pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium do not always make enough progress, particularly those who did very well at primary school. Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make reasonable progress.
- Pupils are taught a suitable range of subjects across all years. The content of the curriculum in Years 7 and 8 is being revised so that work for pupils is made more challenging.
- The sixth form requires improvement. It has grown in recent years and is increasingly popular with pupils.
- Pupils who study for applied general qualifications achieve very well. However, some teaching of A level is uneven in quality and pupils' results in A-level subjects are generally weaker.

The school has the following strengths

- Good leadership is bringing about rapid improvement following an earlier period of decline. The school is very well supported by its multi-academy trust.
- Pupils' attendance, and their behaviour in lessons and around the school, are good. The school is a harmonious and orderly community.
- A refreshed local governing body, with a new chair, is working effectively with senior leaders and the trust to improve the school.
- Teachers and other staff are very well supported. They share the new headteacher's new vision for a successful school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen teaching in the school by:
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and by encouraging pupils to think more for themselves
 - implementing agreed assessment policies in all classrooms
 - checking that there are enough opportunities for pupils to write at length.
- Improve the progress made by pupils by:
 - accelerating the progress made by pupils, particularly in mathematics, English and modern foreign languages
 - ensuring that the work set for pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 is more challenging
 - checking that there are enough opportunities for pupils to write at length
 - paying more attention to disadvantaged pupils who did well in primary school so that they do not fall behind other high-attaining pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and, therefore, the progress made by sixth-form students who study on weaker-performing A-level courses.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- A new headteacher started at the school in September 2017. Her appointment followed a period of decline in the school's examination results. Her ambitious and strong leadership has led to significant staffing changes to the senior leadership team. She has introduced a sense of urgency into tackling weaknesses in the school.
- She is very ably supported by the chief executive of the multi-academy trust. He acted robustly to introduce new leadership to school following poor GCSE results in 2016 and 2017. He has worked well with the governing body, including by offering robust challenge, to ensure that they discharge their responsibilities effectively.
- The new senior leadership team has quickly set and achieved higher standards in relation to conduct, appearance and attitudes to learning. They have explained new requirements clearly to staff, parents, carers and pupils, and their hard work in these areas has led to remarkably rapid improvement. They have fostered an open culture where debate is seen as healthy.
- Senior leaders have introduced new systems for monitoring the impact of teaching. These have been supported by most teachers and other staff. However, they are at an early stage of implementation and some middle leaders have been quicker than others to embrace the new ways of working.
- Pupils are taught the subjects of the national curriculum before opting to study a range of relevant subjects at key stage 4. The content of the curriculum is being revised, particularly in Year 7 and Year 8, to make sure that pupils access hard enough work. However, this is in the early stages of development.
- Pupils have ample opportunities to develop personally and widen their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding through routine lessons, regular extra-curricular opportunities and 'drop-down days'. Pupils are generally well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- A new programme of training offers teachers and other staff regular opportunities to refresh their skills. This programme is linked to new and more robust reviews of their performance.
- Senior leaders know the school, and its strengths and weaknesses, well given the short amount of time that many of them have been in post. In a few instances, for example in the sixth form, they have a more positive picture of teaching and progress than the evidence indicates.
- Leaders are mindful of how funding for SEN is used. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported with care in lessons and make adequate progress overall.
- Leaders use premium funding to support many disadvantaged pupils well. However, disadvantaged pupils who did very well at primary school do not always make the progress expected of them. The school is aware of this and is revising its strategy to focus more on previously higher-attaining disadvantaged pupils.
- The Year 7 literacy and numeracy catch-up funding is used well to help those pupils who did less well at their primary school. Leaders make regular checks on how these

pupils are doing.

- Parents expressed support during the inspection for the improvements being made to the school. They commented on the positive changes made by the new headteacher. Some parents expressed concern about the behaviour. A few also commented on the abundance of supply teachers, the quality of organisation at parents' consultation evening, and a lack of regular information about pupils' progress. However, these concerns were considered carefully during the inspection. Most were either historic or about issues that the school is working to resolve

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective. The new chair of governors has formidable experience of governance and a track record of successful school improvement. He has a strong understanding of the school's performance, including its recent history. He is very well supported by a skilled and knowledgeable group of governors, who come from a variety of relevant backgrounds and industries.
- Until recently, governors relied overly on briefings and unsubstantiated assertions from previous senior leaders to keep them informed. They are now very clear about what information they need to seek to govern well. The new headteacher provides the governing body regularly with detailed information about the quality of provision in the school and reliable updates on the pupils' progress.
- Governors are committed to improving the school and now provide strong support, alongside challenge, to school leaders. The governing body has clear terms of reference. It understands and discharges its statutory responsibilities, including for safeguarding, well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Suitably detailed checks are made on all staff prior to starting work in the school. Recruitment and training records are comprehensive. Staff have been trained on various key aspects of safeguarding, which include child protection, and all new staff are expected to follow agreed procedures. Staff are vigilant and know what to do if a safeguarding concern arises.
- A senior member of oversees all safeguarding arrangements, including by meeting regularly with a safeguarding governor and a representative of the multi-academy trust.
- Pupils say that they feel safe. They are supported well in keeping themselves safe. They have regular assemblies and lessons when they are taught about the risks that they may face inside and outside of school. Pupils are able to talk to suitable adults if they have any fears or concerns. Pupils are confident that instances of bullying are acted on and that pupils in the school look after one another.
- School staff work well with those from outside agencies, which helps to ensure that any concerns are acted on swiftly by all parties. All safeguarding arrangements are fit for purpose and records are detailed and of high quality.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently strong enough in recent years. As a result, not all pupils learn as quickly as they could. A new approach to improving teaching has been taken by the new leadership team, which involves better training, more-frequent checks and greater sharing of best practice.
- This new approach has been in place for a few weeks. Understandably, these new expectations of teaching and how pupils should learn in lessons are not yet reflected in all routine classroom practice.
- Teaching in some English, mathematics, modern foreign languages, art and technology lessons still lacks challenge. Pupils are not always expected to work hard enough and occasionally time is wasted. In many lessons, as is evident from workbooks, pupils are not expected to think or find out things for themselves enough. This is limiting the learning of pupils, particularly higher-attaining pupils. Pupils are not always expected to write at enough length. Errors or misconceptions in their work are frequent and not enough is done to improve their basic literacy and numeracy.
- Until recently, pupils were taught by too many temporary and non-specialist teachers. In mathematics, not all pupils are taught by teachers with expert subject knowledge and this limits learning. This is being remedied.
- Each subject area has its own approach to helping pupils improve their work. In many cases, teachers do not stick to the approach they have agreed. These inconsistencies, taken together, make it hard for pupils to acquire good learning habits.
- A new whole-school system for setting targets, monitoring progress and adjusting work has been introduced recently. It provides teachers with a wealth of assessment information, which is updated regularly. However, the new system is not taken advantage of fully by teachers. For example, there are inconsistencies in how well this information is used to set new work for pupils. It is not done in the same way by different teachers, even from within the same subject area.
- Pupils benefit from stronger teaching in some subjects, for example in science, music, performance, humanities and physical education. In the better lessons, teachers have established the expectation that all pupils will work very hard. They set work that is challenging and translate agreed policy into practice in the classroom. The teachers use assessment information to fill gaps in prior learning and to cater for the needs of pupils who are at risk of falling behind.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attendance is good. Regular monitoring, alongside a series of effective sanctions, has led to attendance figures that compare well with all other schools. Any pupil, or group of pupils, with less than adequate attendance is given help and support to improve. Rates of persistent absence are low.

- Pupils are proud of their school. They make an effort to be smart and usually conform to the new uniform regulations. They are good-humoured when they are reminded, for example in corridors, of the school's expectations. Relationships between staff and most pupils are very courteous and friendly. Pupils are often very polite, opening doors to visitors, for example, and are keen to talk about how they enjoy school.
- Pupils are given a wide variety of opportunities to develop as young people. They are keen to volunteer, to raise money for charity, and take part in lunchtime and after-school clubs. The school has a good reputation for performing arts and many pupils take part in musical, dramatic and other performances. New initiatives are welcomed, and the school is raising funds currently to establish its own 'enterprise village' in the school grounds.
- Pupils are respectful of each other and of their differences. A group of pupils, known as the 'smilers', provide peer support and help for any pupil who is experiencing difficulty. Pupils care for the physical environment. It is generally litter-free and well kept. Most areas of the school, including the newer areas, are attractive and welcoming.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school is an orderly and calm community. Pupils conduct themselves well inside and outside of lessons. They move between lessons sensibly and without undue delay.
- In the overwhelming majority of lessons, they listen sensibly and respond swiftly to instructions. In a very few lessons, mostly in lower-attaining classes, pupils are less cooperative but such instances are usually short-lived and managed well by teachers.
- Levels of exclusion are low. Pupils are meeting the new higher expectations set by leaders. Staff are very visible at break and lunchtimes and this helps to promote good behaviour.
- Parents raised some concerns during the inspection about the behaviour of pupils. However, their concerns largely related to historic instances of poor behaviour. The school keeps careful records of instances of poor behaviour and reviews these frequently.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' outcomes are improving but remain too low. In 2017, too few pupils achieved the GCSE grades that they were capable of, particularly in mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- Pupils in the current Year 11 are making better progress than the previous cohort but many are still underachieving, including in mathematics.
- Similarly, pupils in Year 10 are not making the progress they should, given their starting points. For these pupils, uneven or patchy progress in earlier years means that there remain significant gaps in their understanding. The school is working hard to support these pupils, including by arranging extra classes and revision sessions.
- Pupils in the other years are making better progress as teaching improves. However, some higher-attaining disadvantaged pupils, across all years, need extra attention so

that their progress rates do not decline as they grow older. Literacy and numeracy are not developed sufficiently in all lessons and some pupils make basic errors in their work.

- Leaders have recognised that more work is required to revise the content of the curriculum in Year 7 and in Year 8 so that pupils do not repeat work they have done in primary school. The school manages pastoral transition between primary and secondary school well but arrangements for improving curriculum transition are still in the early stages.
- Pupils usually leave school prepared for the next stage in their education or training in terms of their personal development. Most are confident learners when they leave school. They are given suitable careers advice, which supports them in making decisions about the next stage of their education or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The sixth form has grown and is increasingly popular in the local area. It is led by a committed and experienced leader, who is a passionate advocate of what the sixth form can offer. Further work is needed to ensure that evaluation of sixth-form teaching is more consistently accurate.
- Sixth-form pupils speak very positively about their experiences and the effective care and support they receive. Personal development, behaviour and welfare are good.
- Class sizes are small. Pupils benefit from intensive mentoring and tutoring, which supports them in their studies as well as when making university or employment applications. Careers advice and guidance are good and support pupils in making informed and ambitious choices. An increasing proportion aim to go on to study at university, including Russell Group universities.
- All sixth-form pupils undertake some work experience, which is usually linked to the area of work or study that they wish to pursue after leaving the sixth form. This extends their skills well and helps them to develop personally.
- Sixth-form pupils follow A-level or applied general qualification courses. A few pupils resit a level 2 qualification, or GCSE, in mathematics and/or English. The results achieved by pupils studying applied general qualifications are very impressive. Pupils often do much better than expected given their starting points.
- Sixth-form pupils who follow A-level courses do not do as well. Many do not achieve the grades that they should. Until very recently, the system for monitoring the quality of A-level teaching was largely ineffective. As a result, the head of sixth form did not have a wholly accurate view of the quality of teaching or the pupils' likely achievement. This is being rectified but improvements in monitoring must accelerate so that all A-level teaching reflects the intellectual challenge and pace needed for pupils to make good progress. Teaching in science and further mathematics is good.
- Retention and progression rates are good. Pupils usually complete the programmes of study they have started. Pupils continue onto the next level of study, or suitable training, once they leave the sixth form.

School details

Unique reference number	142313
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10041524

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

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive (non-selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,147
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	160
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Mr C Hunt
Headteacher	Mrs M Mincher
Telephone number	01543 227320
Website	www.kingsmeadschool.net
Email address	headteacher@kingsmeadschool.net
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Kingsmead School is a member of the John Taylor Multi-Academy Trust. It is an average-sized secondary school. It converted to become an academy shortly after the last inspection in 2015. The multi-academy trust is led by a chief executive and a board of trustees. The school has its own local governing body.
- The large majority of pupils at the school are from white British backgrounds. A smaller than average proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language. There are more boys than girls in the school.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.

- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for support from the pupil premium is above average.
- The school runs a Saturday school for pupils during term time. It operates throughout the year and is mostly attended by pupils who wish to do additional revision.
- No pupils from the school attend alternative or part-time provision.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum levels expected for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- During the visit, inspectors visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning. They observed pupils' behaviour inside lessons and around the school.
- They met with senior leaders, middle leaders, support staff and a group of teachers. They also met with the chief executive of the multi-academy trust and representatives of the local governing body.
- They spoke with groups of pupils, formally and around the school, about teaching and their experience since joining the school.
- They scrutinised a range of documents, including published performance information and a wealth of information provided by the school.
- They took account of 46 responses to a staff questionnaire and other written comments from staff. They also took account of 142 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, including 87 accompanying free-text comments.

Inspection team

Mike Cladingbowl, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Haskins	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Newsome	Ofsted Inspector
Adele Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Andy Fisher	Ofsted Inspector

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Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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