



Samuel King's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 112378
Local Authority Cumbria
Inspection number 289266
Inspection date 22 November 2006
Reporting inspector Janet Palmer HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Church Road
School category	Community		Alston, Cumbria
Age range of pupils	11–16		CA9 3QU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01434 381236
Number on roll (school)	211	Fax number	01434 382082
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Chris Reed
		Headteacher	Mr Maurice Peddely
Date of previous school inspection	1 May 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–16	22 November 2006	289266

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Samuel King's School is a much smaller than average, rural, community school for pupils aged 11 to 16. It had been awarded specialist technology status and is part of the Rural Academy of Cumbria. The pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. There are more boys than girls and the great majority are White British. There is a higher than average percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Samuel King's is an effective school that provides a good education for its pupils, within a caring and supportive environment.

The greatest strength of the school lies in the very successful partnership the headteacher has forged with, for example, higher and further education institutions, the Rural Academy, a local specialist sports college and other schools in Europe. These partnerships have brought many new curricular and out-of-school experiences to pupils, helping to combat their rural isolation and developing the skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

The standards the pupils attain are above average and the progress they make is good. Science is particularly strong and the school's specialist technology status has helped to fund improvements to science laboratories and enhance the provision for information and communications technology (ICT), mathematics and design and technology. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and pupils achieve well in most subjects. However, the provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.

Pupils enjoy coming to school. They behave well in lessons and around the building. In class, they are attentive and hardworking and are given opportunities to work in teams, take part in discussions and work independently. Pupils take advantage of the various clubs and sports activities, educational trips and cultural exchanges. The school environment is pleasant and inviting with many attractive displays of pupils' work and learning resources.

Strong partnerships have enabled Samuel King's School to offer a wide range of award bearing courses to meet pupils' differing needs. These span National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at Level 1 to advanced subsidiary (AS) and advanced (A level) qualifications. This is very impressive considering the small number of pupils in the school and its isolated location. The school's provision of religious education does not meet statutory requirements at Key Stage 4.

The headteacher and leadership team know the school well and have rigorous systems in place to enable them to continue to improve. The budget is well managed and the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure the school meets the statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education.
- Improve the provision for citizenship.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards are above average. The 2006 national test and examination results show improvement at all levels and a substantial improvement at

Key Stage 4, following a dip in performance in 2005. The small number of pupils in each cohort can have a disproportionate effect on results year on year.

Pupils make good progress from their starting points in Year 7 to their achievements when leaving school at the end of Key Stage 4. In the 2006 end of Key Stage 3 national tests, the percentage of pupils meeting their targets increased in mathematics, English and science, with pupils doing particularly well in science. These results were above average for the county.

In 2006, the number of pupils achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE level increased by 18 percentage points compared to 2005, which is almost as high as the very good 2004 results. This represents good achievement compared to the national average.

At GCSE level, pupils achieve particularly well in art, English literature, design and technology (food), catering, French, ICT and science. Pupils do less well in English where their progress, compared to pupils in other similar schools, is declining, although it is still above average. Standards in citizenship are not as high as they should be.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

The school accurately judges the personal development and well-being of pupils to be good. Parents, carers and pupils agree with this view. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Pupils have benefited from intercultural exchanges with partner schools in Norway, Austria and Greece and from other social and cultural out-of-school activities.

Pupils act responsibly, their attendance is good and they are positive about school. They say the school is a safe environment and that adults react quickly and effectively to incidents of reported bullying. The school offers healthy food options and most pupils eat healthily in school. Pupils learn about sex and relationship education, drugs awareness, nutrition, fitness and road safety and are aware of the consequences of risky and unsafe practices. Pupils are expected to contribute to the school and wider community and they do so with enthusiasm. The school council leads on a range of charity fundraising activities and pupils take part in local community action.

The development of pupils' workplace skills is outstanding. The particularly good range of vocational options, work experience, enterprise education, team-building activities, national competitions and other curricular and extra-curricular provision ensures that pupils develop good workplace skills.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are planned with clear objectives and a range of tasks to meet pupils' needs. Teachers show good subject knowledge and pupils show a willingness to learn. The good teaching observed was characterised by pace, challenge and high expectations. Teachers made sure that pupils understood what they were learning and why, and used a range of teaching methods that captured their interest. Pupils were active and had good opportunities to discuss and reflect on their learning.

Written work is marked thoroughly by teachers and pupils are given detailed and informative feedback linked to targets. In many subjects, pupils are helped to develop their literacy skills through extended writing and opportunities to utilise ICT.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provision is satisfactory overall, although there are many good features. The taught curriculum meets statutory requirements at Key Stage 3 and there are lots of extra-curricular activities for pupils to choose. At Key Stage 4, the wide range of options meets pupils' needs and interests, but the provision for religious education in Year 11 and for citizenship, at both key stages, is inadequate.

The good curriculum opportunities at Key Stage 4 includes award-bearing courses in catering, electronics, land-based industries, graphic design, astronomy and business studies. Partnerships with local, higher and further education institutions and the Rural Academy have increased provision to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils as well as those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Some pupils are entered for GCSE examinations at the end of Year 9, enabling them to take AS and A-level examinations in English language at Key Stage 4.

The provision for sports is enhanced through collaboration with a local specialist sports college. Pupils also benefit from international exchanges and visits and activities such as 'Outward Bound', drama productions and orienteering.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The provision for care, guidance and support is good. The size of the school makes it easier for staff to know their pupils very well. There is a strong level of commitment to pupils' welfare. Procedures for child protection are in place, health and safety procedures are well managed and systems for risk assessment, including those for out-of-school visits, are secure.

Transition arrangements for Years 7 and 11 are thorough and pupils receive good careers guidance. Vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities are well supported and their achievement is good. Parents and carers are very satisfied with the school and the way their children are looked after. Good links with parents and carers are maintained through regular governors' reports, newsletters and the school website; attendance at parents' evenings has risen. Pupils make known their views and ideas through the school council and, more recently, through the virtual learning environment pages of the school website. This is an innovative way for the school to gauge opinion and pupils' views are taken seriously.

Assessment practices are secure. The analysis of pupils' progress towards their targets is a real strength of the school's work and provides good academic guidance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good with examples of outstanding practice. Strong and visionary leadership, together with increasingly effective management, have enabled the school to provide a good standard of education. The headteacher has built very successful partnerships, which have promoted students' well-being, helped combat rural isolation and raise standards.

The school monitors its performance well. There is an effective programme of classroom observations in place and good practice is now shared across the school. The school's self-review is accurate and informs an improvement plan which is detailed, rigorous and achievable.

The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The headteacher keeps the governors well informed. Consequently, they are supportive and are actively involved in the work of the school.

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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?	1
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	2
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	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	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	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
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	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

Samuel King's School

Church Road

Alston

Cumbria

CA9 3QU

22 November 2006

Dear Pupils

I would like to thank you for making me feel welcome at your school. I appreciate the time many of you gave to discuss your work and other activities.

These were the main things I found out about Samuel King's School during the inspection:

- the headteacher and senior managers are doing a good job to ensure that you have a good standard of education
- examination results are good and you do particularly well in art, English literature, design and technology (food), catering French, ICT and science. Pupils with learning difficulties also do well
- you are offered a wide range of subjects to study, particularly at Key Stage 4, where some of you take GCSE and A-level qualifications early. There are also many vocational courses, work experience, enterprise education, team-building activities, national competitions, sports and arts activities for you to enjoy
- your behaviour is good and you get on well with your teachers and each other. You enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure and that, on the rare occasions that bullying does occur, it is quickly dealt with by your teachers
- your teachers plan their lessons well and find interesting and challenging tasks for you to do. They mark your work thoroughly and give you detailed feedback so you know what you need to do to improve.

I am recommending that the school makes sure that religious education is taught in Year 11 and that there are improvements in the way you study citizenship to help you to reach higher standards in that subject.

Finally, I would like to thank you again for welcoming me into your school and being so friendly and polite. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer

Her Majesty's Inspector