

Kings Langley School

Love Lane, Kings Langley, WD4 9HN

Inspection dates 16–17 December 2014

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Good | 2 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Outstanding | 1 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Sixth form provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and senior leaders have created a school in which students learn to develop the qualities of character and the academic skills to become successful citizens.
- Standards have risen in this improving school. The proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is above the national average.
- Students make good progress across a wide range of subjects. This is because they have excellent attitudes to learning. They learn not to give up and to support each other.
- Achievement is typically good in all year groups because of regularly good teaching. This has improved as a result of carefully targeted training and support by school leaders.
- The sixth form is good. Students are well prepared for higher education, training or employment.
- Strong support for literacy skills, and a popular library at the heart of the school, successfully encourage a love of reading.
- The school's work in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students leads to outstanding behaviour.
- Highly positive relationships among students and between staff and students create a calm, friendly and purposeful place of work.
- Students see school as a very safe place to be, and they learn exceptionally well how to keep themselves and others safe.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards and progress in science have improved but still remain below the expected levels. This is because too much of the teaching in this subject lacks continuity and consistency.
- While the learning of the most able students is generally good in English and mathematics, not all teachers ensure that students in Years 7 to 11 have the opportunity to reach the highest standards in all subjects.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 36 lessons across the school, including in the sixth form. Of these, 17 were observed jointly with the headteacher or senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team looked at students' work in their books and folders.
- As well as conversations in lessons and at social times during the inspection, discussions were held with four groups of students about the quality of their educational experiences and the standard of behaviour in the school. The inspectors also held meetings with senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 142 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered the 92 responses to a staff questionnaire. Inspectors also considered responses by parents and students to recent questionnaires from the school.
- The inspection team examined: the school's own information on students' recent and current progress; the school's evaluation of how well it is doing and its records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching; records relating to behaviour and attendance; and documents relating to safeguarding.

Inspection team

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Richard Boswell, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Heather Housden | Additional Inspector |
| Susan Bullen | Additional Inspector |
| Gillian Walley | Additional Inspector |
| Jackie Pentlow | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Kings Langley School converted to become an academy school on 1 December 2012. When its predecessor school, Kings Langley School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be good.
- Kings Langley School is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The very large majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students, less than a fifth, who are supported through the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) is below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, at around one quarter, is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 11.
- The school acts as a 'hub' for the Dacorum Family of Schools, providing extended services and family support.
- The school is working in partnership with the University of Birmingham's Jubilee Centre on a research programme, 'Schools of Character', which is looking at how to develop character education.
- Some sixth form students go off site to attend courses at The Hemel Hempstead School, The Cavendish School and John F Kennedy Catholic School.
- Some Key Stage 4 students go off site to attend courses for one day a week at West Herts College, Watford.
- A very small number of students attend full time at the Dacorum Education Support Centre, Hemel Hempstead.
- Work on the complete re-development of the school site under the Priority School Building Programme is targeted to be complete in 2016.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Provide the most able students in Years 7 to 11 with the same level of challenge in all other subjects that they receive in English and mathematics by ensuring teachers always consider their needs when planning their lessons.
- Improve the quality of teaching in science and so raise students' achievement by ensuring that students methodically build their scientific skills and understanding as they move through the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher has created a team of senior, subject and year leaders who all share his high expectations of the school's students and his commitment to their development as successful future citizens. Supported by the governing body, this commitment has driven improvements in the quality of teaching and has raised students' achievement. It has also created the conditions for the students' outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes to learning.
- In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of staff said they feel well supported by school leaders. The monitoring and appraisal of teachers is rigorous. An exceptionally wide variety of additional training is available, from formal courses to the school's regular short training sessions in which teachers update and review their teaching skills and practice.
- The school works hard to ensure that all students have equal access to all opportunities, fosters good relations and tackles discrimination. The school leader with responsibility for disabled students and those who have special educational needs is particularly effective in her work with parents and external agencies. The pupil premium funding benefits disadvantaged students and provides not only additional one-to-one and group tuition but subsidises participation in educational visits. The impact of this spending can be seen in improving outcomes for these students, including the most able among them.
- The school's curriculum is successful in giving a broad and balanced education and students develop the skills they will need in their future lives. For example, all students study design and technology, exercising creative, visual and practical skills. They also improve their literacy skills through a particularly effective programme that is delivered not just through English, but every subject. The acquisition of good communication skills forms an important part of students' social development; they learn to be confident speakers in class, in assemblies, in performances and in competitions and presentations beyond the school. Students watch the news and discuss current affairs in tutor periods, learning about the diversity of cultures and faiths in modern Britain as well as through their lessons in religious education. Students' future destinations are considered from the start, with careers and further education advice beginning in Year 7.
- While the curriculum has many strengths, the leadership of science has been less successful and, in recent years, the school has lacked the capacity to develop this area further. This has led to slower progress and lower standards, particularly in combined science, when compared with other subjects in the school.
- The school meets the statutory requirements for the safeguarding of children. Safeguarding records are meticulous and governors provide exemplary oversight, including spot checks to ensure full compliance. All staff and governors are suitably trained, and all school policies are regularly reviewed. The school keeps a careful check on the attendance and progress of students who attend courses off site.
- The school works closely with the local authority to their mutual benefit. The school receives high-quality training and advice, and the authority makes use of the expertise within the school to share best practice with other schools. The school is also at the heart of the Dacorum Family of Schools, providing a range of extended services including a family support worker who is based at the school.
- The headteacher has developed links with a number of other schools involved in the University of Birmingham's 'Schools of Character' programme, including Wellington College and Eton College. The university has recognised the school's work in developing students' resilience and independence, both of which are evident in their outstanding behaviour.
- The school has rigorous procedures for checking how well students are progressing. Preparations are in place to ensure assessment arrangements continue to be effective when National Curriculum levels are removed.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their roles, and they have a good level of knowledge about the school, its staff and its students. They ensure they are closely involved in the life of the school; they make regular visits and receive presentations from staff at meetings of the governing body. The governing body works closely with senior leaders on long-term planning and is very effective. Governors' understanding of students' achievement and of recent improvements in the quality of teaching means that they are able to challenge and support the senior leaders in equal measure. They set demanding targets, ask difficult questions and are not afraid to tackle any underperformance. Governors are very clear about the link between teachers' pay and students' progress.
- Governors have a professional understanding of financial management, including the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up funding. The school's finances are prudently managed to the benefit of current students. Governors are fully aware of their safeguarding duties and carefully check that statutory requirements are met. They share the headteacher's approach to creating a 'rounded' education and ensuring that students develop tolerance and respect as well as independence and resilience.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is outstanding.
- The school's work in promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development leads to outstanding behaviour. Students are well motivated, respectful of each other and of staff and cooperate particularly well in lessons. They do not give up when they find the work is difficult and are very positive about the level of challenge and support they receive from their teachers.
- Case studies show that the school works very effectively with parents and external agencies to manage and improve the behaviour of students who have specific difficulties, such as managing to cope with anger. They frequently make good progress in their studies in spite of challenging circumstances. Low-level disruption in lessons is rare and is swiftly addressed. Temporary exclusions are used as a final resort and are decreasing, and there have been no permanent exclusions in recent years.
- Students are very positive about their school. They wear their uniform with pride and show respect for its buildings and resources. They have been closely involved in the design process for the construction of their new school.
- Parents and staff are very positive about behaviour in the school and agree that it is very well managed. Parental involvement in the education of their children has helped to drive the year-by-year improvement in attendance for all groups of students, which is now above the national average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding.
- Students know how to stay safe. They learn about how to deal with bullying but say that it seldom occurs at their school, and this is supported by the school's own records. Students are absolutely clear that they have no tolerance of derogatory language about any groups of people or any extremist or discriminatory behaviour.
- Students learn about the practicalities of staying safe, for example in design and technology and physical education, in which they learn to draw up their own risk assessments. In information and communication technology, they learn to be vigilant and to protect their identity when they go online.
- Sixth formers organise whole-school events, such as major school productions with due care and attention to all aspects of health and safety. It is a striking feature of the school that older and younger students work very well together in a wide range of activities.
- Procedures are firmly in place for ensuring that all visitors are suitably checked and monitored. The school ensures that students' behaviour is as good and their safety as well managed when they are on courses

off the school site as on.

The quality of teaching is good

- The quality of teaching is improving strongly and is good across the main school and in the sixth form. As a result, most students make good progress and achieve well.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and share their enthusiasm for their subjects with their students and their expertise with each other. Most teachers have high expectations and plan interesting activities that engage all groups of students, including disadvantaged students and low-attaining students.
- Students make good progress in English and mathematics, with an increasing proportion making accelerated progress and the most able attaining high standards. Work in students' books shows that teachers' marking is frequent and accurate, and students are clear that teachers' comments in books and in class help them to move on in their learning. Homework is timetabled and frequently provides opportunities for students to explore their knowledge and understanding in greater depth through research and inquiry.
- Teachers in every subject ensure that students' develop their literacy skills, and lively debate and discussion are features of many lessons, particularly in religious education and in the sixth form. There are excellent working relationships in the classroom with high levels of respect between staff and students. These lead to outstanding attitudes to learning and are having a positive impact on students' progress.
- The most able students are identified and given appropriately challenging work in English and mathematics. The level of challenge for these students is not always so evident in other subject areas. Not all teachers consider the needs of the most able in their planning and, sometimes, the work that is set is not hard enough and does not promote deeper thinking skills.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported well through careful planning by teachers and by expert assistance from well-trained and experienced support staff.
- The quality of teaching in science is too variable and not enough students make good progress. This is because there is a lack of careful and detailed planning of what needs to be taught and when, and teachers do not always check that basic concepts have been fully understood before moving on.
- Teachers keep a close eye on the progress of each student. They collect and use information about how well students are doing in their subject and share this with subject and senior leaders. This enables them to assess their own effectiveness and to identify any areas that require additional training. The school ensures that students who attend courses off the school site also receive a good quality of teaching and that their progress is closely monitored.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement has been good since the previous inspection, with the exception of GCSE results in 2013. However, following a swift response from senior leaders, the school's performance in 2014 was much improved. The school's information about current students' progress and a scrutiny of students' books show that progress is good and improving further and that the standards achieved in the summer of 2014 are being maintained in the majority of subjects, including English and mathematics. Attainment in the sixth form has improved year by year and is now close to national averages.
- The school has never entered students early for examinations and has not run courses in subjects that were an equivalent to a GCSE. This has contributed to some of the school's results being less strong in recent years. However, in 2014 the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, was above the national average. This means that, over time, students make good progress, given that their starting points are generally average. This is largely because of the school's success in promoting excellent attitudes to learning. Work on the development of

character means that students persevere. As a result, their achievement is good.

- Students in Year 11 made excellent progress in English in 2014; the proportion who made more than expected progress was above the national average. Progress in mathematics is in line with that found nationally. Students develop particularly strong literacy and communication skills across the curriculum. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used to provide expert support for those who start with weaker literacy skills. Reading is actively promoted, and the exceptionally well-resourced and well-managed library is at the heart of the school's success in encouraging a love of books.
- Students make good progress in the sixth form. This includes the very small number who attend courses off the school site. The small number of most able students achieve well in the sixth form and increasingly go on to take courses at prestigious universities around the country. The school recognises, however, that the picture of students' achievement in the sixth form across the full range of subjects is not wholly consistent. Sixth form leaders are addressing these areas.
- The learning of the most able students in mathematics and English is generally good. They make strong progress and achieve standards that are above average in both subjects because teachers have high expectations and students are highly motivated. This is not always the case in all other subjects in Years 7 to 11, in which they are not always stretched sufficiently to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- The school is committed to equality of opportunity and all other groups of students, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs, make good progress across a wide range of subjects. This is because their specific needs are quickly identified and met with high-quality additional support. Students in Years 10 and 11 who attend courses one day a week at a local college or with other providers make good progress. They learn skills that enable all of them to go on to further training, education or employment.
- As a result of using the pupil premium funding to provide carefully targeted support, the progress and attainment of disadvantaged students is improving across all years. Therefore, the gaps between their attainment and the attainment of their peers, both in the school and nationally, are closing. In 2014, the attainment of disadvantaged students in English was behind that of their classmates by a quarter of a grade compared to a whole grade in 2013; they were one third of a grade behind their peers nationally compared to just over one grade in 2013. In mathematics, the gap narrowed in school and nationally from over one grade in 2013 to three quarters of a grade in 2014.
- The attainment of the majority of students' in combined science has been too variable since the previous inspection and has been below the national average in the last two years. This is because teaching has lacked continuity and there have been gaps in students' knowledge and understanding. The smaller number of students taking separate sciences at GCSE, including the most able, have performed well.

The sixth form provision

is good

- Students generally enter the school's increasingly popular sixth form with standards that are in line with or below the national average. They make good progress and typically leave to continue studying in higher education. The small number of higher-attaining students make very good progress, and students regularly take up places at Oxford, Cambridge or other prestigious universities.
- The school exceeds the government's interim minimum standards for achievement in the sixth form, and achievement has improved from year to year. Students who retake their English or mathematics in the sixth form are successful in improving their grades and so become eligible for higher education.
- The school offers an increasingly wide range of subjects and, therefore, fewer students now attend courses off the school site. The progress and welfare of those who do are closely monitored by sixth form leaders.
- There are no barriers to good achievement for specific group of students in the sixth form, including disabled students and those who have special educational needs. They make equally as good progress as

other students. In recent years, disadvantaged students have made better progress than other students.

- Students are exceptionally positive about their experience of the sixth form. This is reflected in very high attendance rates in both Year 12 and Year 13. They throw themselves into the life of the school and take on responsibilities for sports coaching and academic mentoring of younger students, acting as role models for outstanding behaviour. Their awareness of safety is also outstanding, demonstrated, for example, in their independent direction of and participation in school productions, assessing risks in lighting and set building.
- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is good, and teachers' marking of work and feedback to students are particularly effective in promoting good progress. The students demonstrate excellent study skills, from the organisation of their folders to very effective research skills on the internet, checking on sources and using reliable websites. They are very appreciative of the high quality of advice they receive as they plan their futures.
- Sixth form leadership is strong and, while it is very much a part of the school, the sixth form has its own identity of which students are very proud. Leaders closely monitor teaching and students' progress and ensure that students take the most appropriate courses.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | 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 | 139036 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 449254 |

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

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| Type of school | Comprehensive |
| School category | Academy converter |
| 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 | 1078 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 174 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Frances Stickley |
| Headteacher | Gary Lewis |
| Date of previous school inspection | 6 October 2010 |
| Telephone number | 01923 264504 |
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