

Kendrick School
Inspection report – 9th October 2008

Unique Reference Number: 110042

Local Authority: Reading

Inspection number: 325088

Inspection dates: 9 October 2008

Reporting inspector: Barry Jones

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

Type of School: Grammar (selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Girls

Number on roll:

School (total) 701

Sixth form 236

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Chair: Mr Allan Currall

Headteacher: Mrs Marsha Elms

Date of previous school inspection: 19 October 2005

School address: London Road

Reading

RG1 5BN

Telephone number 01189 015859

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Age group: 11-18

Inspection Date(s) 9 October 2008

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

- How well do students progress in the main school and in the sixth form and why?
- How well does the school promote community cohesion and what is the impact of the school's specialist status on partner schools and the wider community?
- What is the quality of academic guidance and how is it used to detect and remedy dips in students' performance? Evidence was gathered from performance data, external monitoring, observations of teaching and the work produced by students. Parents' questionnaires and discussions with students, the chair of governors and staff also contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Kendrick is an oversubscribed, selective school. It has been a specialist science school since 2003 and added a second languages specialism in 2008. Approximately 30 girls each year join the sixth form from other schools. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than in most schools but all are fluent in English. The proportion of girls eligible for free school meals is very low. The school has Healthy Schools and Sportsmark status. A soft federation has been formed with Reading Girls' School. The headteacher of Kendrick is now the executive headteacher of both schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school Grade: 1

The previous inspection concluded that Kendrick was a 'thriving community seeking to do its very best for its students'. Students in this outstanding school continue to prosper academically and in their personal development. It has used this strong platform to extend its role in supporting other schools. This is principally through its excellent headteacher who is accredited as a 'National Leader in Education'. She has been used successfully both nationally and by the local authority to bolster the leadership and management in less successful schools. Kendrick is identified as a 'national support school'. Members of the staff, particularly from the mathematics and science departments, also provide valued support for other schools. This is not at the expense of education of students at Kendrick. The school has two excellent deputies who also provide outstanding leadership. The great majority of parents are appreciative of the school's work. A typical comment was, 'The school manages to achieve fantastic academic results but yet the pupils seem open-minded and lively thinkers. The results seem to be obtained by fostering individuality.'

Students' standards on joining the school are exceptionally high. They are also consistently and exceptionally high in GCSE examinations. For instance, the proportion of students attaining either a grade A or A* is more than four times the national average. The high levels of attainment at each key stage mean that some of the common measures for progress used in most schools are not sufficiently robust. The school is considering other ways of assessing progress over time, both for Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. Although there is more work to be done the school is at the cutting edge of developments. The school's analysis shows that achievement in the school's specialist subjects of mathematics and science is consistently outstanding. Appropriately, these departments have led some initiatives across the school, for instance, the successful introduction of interactive whiteboards to make lessons even more interesting. Achievement in English dipped significantly at GCSE level in 2007. The English teachers subsequently focused more sharply on ensuring that students know their assessment objectives and the next step in their learning. The curriculum was already in the process of being modified to make it more

appropriate for the students and this work continued. Consequently, in 2008 provisional English results at all key stages are back to the extremely high levels that the school demands. This restores the position whereby achievement is outstanding across all subjects.

The very high levels of care and support contribute significantly to the students' outstanding personal development.

Students thoroughly enjoy school and feel very safe and secure. Relationships are excellent and are underpinned by a very caring, supportive staff. Students make a very positive contribution to their learning and to helping others. The personal, health and social education and citizenship programmes are effective. Students have an excellent understanding of healthy-living issues and many excel at sports. A good range of enterprise activities have helped to develop students' economic understanding. Together with their excellent basic and personal skills this means they are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage in their education or career.

The school's promotion of community cohesion is outstanding in some respects, for instance, its contribution to the development of its partner primary and secondary schools. Students come from a very wide area such that the very low proportion of students eligible for free school meals does not reflect local circumstances. This partly explains why its work with the local community is less strong. For instance, as part of its specialist school work it offered adult numeracy classes but this initiative floundered. The school has not evaluated the impact of its work with the community.

Leadership and management are outstanding. The principal drive comes from the outstanding senior leadership team. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is rigorous. It is linked suitably to staff development. For instance, many teachers have received training in strategies to develop students' levels of logical thinking. This has added to their excellent subject knowledge and enabled them to adopt a wider range of teaching styles in the classroom. As a result, although there is some variation in the quality, teaching and learning are outstanding overall throughout the school. The school is not complacent and is always striving to do better. Since the previous inspection, there have been very significant improvements in the provision and use of information and communication technology. Following full consultation with students and parents, it has been decided not to offer vocational courses in this highly academic environment. However, the school is exploring with other partners how these opportunities could be made available to Kendrick students in the future. Given the outstanding leadership and its proven track record, the school has an

excellent capacity to improve further. This is exemplified by the fact that it has been selected to be one of a small number of schools nationally to receive new science facilities as part of the Project Faraday initiative. This has the potential to put the school at the leading edge of science teaching and learning.

Effectiveness of the sixth form Grade: 1

Kendrick is justly proud of its sixth form. Standards are consistently and exceptionally high and achievement is outstanding. For instance, most students attain a grade A or B at GCE Advanced level; the proportion achieving this standard is double the national average. Other aspects of personal development are not neglected in the relentless pursuit of academic excellence. As one new student in Year 12 said, 'Kendrick is more than academic. There is a real school community. It is a small school and everyone knows one another.' As a result of the school's specialist status, there has been a considerable increase in the number of students following mathematics courses. The quality of teaching and learning across subjects is outstanding. The teaching itself is a balance of good and outstanding. Additionally, the students are highly talented and motivated and contribute significantly to their own and their peers' learning. In an excellent Year 13 physics lesson, students took responsibility for the class and did this well. In a few lessons, teachers do not make sufficient use of this rich resource and there is too much focus on imparting information. Students are mentored frequently by their tutors and this process is integrated well with mentoring by subject teachers. Students new to the sixth form have their needs assessed and are given additional help as appropriate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Strengthen links with the local community and evaluate the outcomes.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate

Overall effectiveness

School 16-19

Overall

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?

1 1

Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection Yes Yes

How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? 1 1

The capacity to make any necessary improvements 1 1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve? 1 1

The standards¹ reached by learners 1 1

How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners

1 1

How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress 1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners? 1 1

The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development 1

The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles 1

The extent to which learners adopt safe practices 1

How well learners enjoy their education 1

The attendance of learners 1

The behaviour of learners 1

The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community 1

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 learners' needs?

1 1

How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interest of learners?

1 1

How well are learners cared for, guided and supported? 1 1

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.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to

come to a secure judgement.

2 IE - denotes that insufficient evidence was available to inspectors for a judgement to be made.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?

1 1

How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education

1

How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards 1

The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation 1 1

How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated 1

How well does the school contribute to community cohesion? 2

How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for

money

1

The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities 1

Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements? Yes Yes

Does this school require special measures? No

Does this school require a notice to improve? No

Annex B

Letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection.

22 October 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Kendrick School, Reading, RG1 5BN

Thank you for your help and cooperation when we inspected your school. You told us you are proud of your school and we can see why. Girls in Years 7 to 11 were very enthusiastic and said how much they enjoy school. The Head Girl's team felt that their views are listened to and that the school takes action if there is a good case made. A past Head Girl team suggested the introduction of a house system which is now in place. The new team has been able to contribute to the debate over teaching and learning.

We agree that Kendrick is an outstanding school. These are the things we liked most.

- You attain excellent standards in your GCSE and A level examinations.
- There is a strong sense of community and you get along with one another.
- The quality of teaching is high and staff have your best interests at heart.
- The specialist subjects of mathematics and science give an excellent lead in the school.
- The school is exceptionally well led by the headteacher and her team.

The excellent work of the school is recognised nationally and staff from the school are used to help elsewhere.

The school is not complacent and is always striving to improve further. For instance, Kendrick has been selected to receive 50% funding towards new science facilities which should mean that learning is even stronger than it is now. We have asked the school to do one thing connected with this journey. As part of its specialist status, it receives some funding for work involving the local community. This has not been as successful as other initiatives and we are asking the school to seek ways of strengthening this aspect too.

I wish you continuing success in the future. It was a privilege to come to your school and meet you.

Yours sincerely

Barry Jones
Lead Inspector