

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Kingsdown School

Hyde Rd, Stratton St Margaret, Swindon SN2 7SH

Inspection dates:

18 and 19 March 2025

Outcome

Kingsdown School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Emma Leigh-Bennett. This school is part of the River Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Paul James, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jeremy Long.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils feel welcome and included at this school. Pupils feel safe. They have trusted adults at school who they know will help them if they have any worries.

Pupils behave well. They strive to meet the high expectations the school has of their conduct. Many wear the badges they are awarded for demonstrating the school's values with great pride. These values, which the school calls 'BEATS', support pupils to become respectful and responsible members of the community.

The school has high expectations of pupils' achievement. Pupils know and appreciate that the school wants the best for them.

Pupils enjoy supporting others. For instance, pupils in Year 8 help new Year 7 pupils to settle into the school. Prefects, 'head' pupils, 'here to hear listeners' and transition ambassadors all contribute to the sense of pride and belonging that pupils have. The work of the student council leads to tangible changes in the school. This helps pupils to see the value of sharing their views.

The school provides many opportunities for pupils to develop their talents and interests, making sure these experiences are inclusive. There are many trips and visits, as well as regular clubs for pupils to attend.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has introduced a new shared approach to teaching to support pupils to learn well. Leaders have particularly considered how to best support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Although the school's published outcomes in 2024 were below national averages, pupils' current work and knowledge show they are progressing well through the curriculum.

Teachers have strong subject knowledge. They typically introduce new content clearly and use the whole-school approaches to teaching well. The work pupils complete is often well matched to the ambitious curriculum that the school has designed. However, sometimes the quality of teachers' explanations is not consistently strong. In addition, at times, teaching activities do not help pupils to achieve fully the curriculum's aims. When this occurs, pupils do not learn as well as they could across all areas of the curriculum.

High-quality advice and training enable staff to identify and provide effective support for pupils with SEND. Consequently, most pupils with SEND learn an ambitious curriculum effectively. Pupils at the specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND (specially resourced provision) attend most lessons alongside their peers in the wider school, thus benefiting from specialist facilities and teachers' subject expertise.

The guided reading programme aims to build pupils' love of reading. The school ensures pupils read often enough to maintain their fluency and confidence. Pupils who have fallen behind with reading are identified promptly. They get the support they need to catch up.

Pupils' attendance has improved significantly. Staff have a comprehensive approach to removing the barriers that prevent some pupils from attending. This has been very successful in many cases. However, some pupils continue to be absent from school too often. This prevents them from achieving as well as they could and means they do not fully experience the wider personal development the school provides.

The school has a comprehensive approach to preparing pupils for life beyond school. There is a suitable curriculum for teaching pupils about all aspects of personal, social and health education. The school adapts this curriculum in light of emerging local and national potential risk factors. This helps pupils to understand how to stay safe, including when online. Employer events and visits to further education providers, alongside careers education, advice and guidance, help pupils feel well prepared for their next steps.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development. They have improved pupils' attendance and behaviour while being mindful of staff's workload. Staff have been supported to develop the skills they need to ensure that teaching is in line with the new approach the school is taking. This work is at an early stage. Those responsible for governance have the expertise they need to support and challenge the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Sometimes, the teaching methods and activities used are not effective enough. The quality of teachers' explanations and teaching activities does not consistently enable pupils to learn as well as they could. The school and trust should ensure that staff use the whole-school approaches to teaching consistently so that pupils make the best possible progress through the curriculum.
- The attendance of some pupils with SEND and disadvantaged pupils remains too low. As a result, these pupils do not achieve well, nor do they experience the wider personal development that the school provides. The trust and school should continue to improve attendance so that more pupils achieve well.

Background

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024, graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in January 2020.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	145139
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	10344807
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,034
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jeremy Long
CEO of the trust	Paul James
Headteacher	Emma Leigh-Bennett
Website	www.kingsdownschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 January 2020, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This school uses four unregistered alternative provisions and five registered alternative provisions.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has a specially resourced provision. This provides education for 14 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector met with representatives of those responsible for governance and with leaders from the River Learning Trust.
- Inspectors considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, and the views of staff and pupils in Ofsted's online surveys. Inspectors also spoke to pupils and staff in meetings and around the school site.
- An inspector visited the specially resourced provision.

Inspection team

Sarah Favager-Dalton, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Paul Nicholson

Ofsted Inspector

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