

King Edward VI High School

Westway, Stafford, Staffordshire ST17 9YJ

Inspection dates

3–4 July 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, well supported by senior leaders, has ensured rapid improvements in all aspects of the school's work since the previous inspection. Effective teaching means that pupils in key stages 3 and 4 now make good progress.
- Assessment information is used very well throughout the school. Teachers use it to inform their lesson planning. Leaders scrutinise it thoroughly to identify issues and to plan future interventions. However, leaders do not analyse information about attendance and behaviour as effectively.
- Governors know the school very well. They provide leaders with effective support and rigorous challenge. They have contributed considerably to the school's recent improvement.
- Middle leaders form a committed and improving team. However, some currently lack the expertise to lead the improvement of teaching in their subjects without considerable support from senior leaders.
- Most teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan engaging and challenging activities which help pupils to make good progress. They use questions well to deepen pupils' understanding of their work.
- Relationships are strong throughout the school. Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils trust their teachers and other adults. Consequently, they feel safe and well supported.
- A little weaker teaching remains. Here, teachers do not check on pupils' understanding or use questions to deepen their learning. At times, some pupils find work too easy.
- Pupils now make good progress in almost all subjects by the end of Year 11. Achievement is strongest in the humanities subjects. It remains weakest in science.
- Pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities make very good progress. They are well taught and provided with excellent support.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and at other times of the day. They are polite, articulate and friendly. The school is calm and orderly throughout the day.
- The sixth form requires improvement because, until recently, some students embarked on A-level courses that were not appropriate to their abilities. Several then failed to complete their courses. Additionally, non-qualification activity is not as well planned as other aspects of students' study programmes.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that pupils make at least good progress in all subjects, including science, by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan activities which provide sufficient challenge to pupils of all abilities
 - regularly check on pupils' understanding in lessons
 - use questions to deepen pupils' understanding of the work they are studying.
- Improve the sixth form by ensuring that:
 - effective advice and guidance means that all students embark on courses which are appropriate to their abilities when they start Year 12
 - all students complete high-quality non-qualification activity which complements their studies and helps to develop their personal qualities.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership by ensuring that:
 - leaders routinely analyse and evaluate information about behaviour and attendance to identify patterns and trends and then use this analysis to inform future actions
 - all middle leaders have the skills and expertise to lead the improvement of teaching in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Over the last two years, the school has improved in every respect. Expectations of staff and pupils are now high, with everyone expected to 'be the best you can be'. Teaching is now effective across the school and pupils are making good progress as a result. Senior leaders know the school well, including its strengths and those areas that still need to improve. Their plans to address weaknesses are clear and detailed. They focus well on the school's key priorities.
- Leaders use assessment information very well. They have ensured that teachers' assessments are reliable by providing training and making procedures very clear and easy to understand. They also compare teachers' assessments to externally marked tests to check their accuracy. Leaders use this information to spot trends and patterns and to direct intervention to where it is needed most. For example, leaders' analysis has identified issues with the progress of some boys in Year 10. They are now seeking to address this issue through extra support. Most teachers use assessment information well in ensuring that their lessons are well pitched to pupils' abilities.
- Senior leaders have carefully and thoughtfully designed the school's curriculum, which meets pupils' needs and interests. Some subjects, such as science, history and geography begin GCSE courses in Year 9. Others, including art, music and design technology, begin in Year 10. This means that pupils have some choice over their studies in Year 9 but still continue with a broad curriculum. This is successful in motivating pupils throughout key stages 3 and 4. Because the school is small, financial constraints mean that subjects cannot be offered if only a few pupils wish to take them. Leaders address this issue by running some subjects, such as music, outside of the school day. This particularly benefits talented or most-able pupils. Leaders and governors evaluate the curriculum each year, and make changes when evidence tells them that an aspect needs to be improved.
- A 'nurture group' runs in Years 7 and 8 and includes pupils with low starting points, many of whom have SEN and/or disabilities. A small group of teachers and other adults, with particular expertise, teach these groups. Their curriculum has a particular focus on improving basic skills, including reading. They have weekly 'forest school' lessons where they grow plants and learn about the environment. Pupils spoke enthusiastically with inspectors about how they had recently been foraging for wild garlic and had then used it to bake garlic bread. Provision for these pupils is highly effective in developing their social skills. They also make strong academic progress from their starting points.
- The school is part of the 'Stafford Sixth Form Partnership'. This is a group of five schools which collaborates to provide sixth formers with a much broader range of A-level options than any one school could offer. Consequently, students who join the sixth form benefit from a very wide choice of A-level choices.
- Provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is of a high quality. The provision is well led and consequently pupils are very well supported both in lessons and at other times. Leaders carefully track these pupils' progress and provide extra help if they begin to fall behind.

They carefully check that any additional support is having the desired impact. If it is not, they change the help being provided. Strong academic support, an appropriate curriculum and excellent pastoral care ensure that these pupils are making strong progress across the school.

- Leaders mostly use additional funding, including the pupil premium and the Year 7 catch-up premium, well. They carefully track the progress of disadvantaged pupils and provide good-quality extra help if they begin to fall behind with their work. Senior leaders carefully and accurately evaluate the impact that additional academic interventions are having. However, middle leaders who also have a role in evaluating the impact of this funding do this less effectively because some lack the expertise that is needed.
- Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching in the school. They know where it is strongest, and they know where further improvement is needed. They ensure that training is well planned and directed to those aspects, subjects and individuals where it is most needed. However, middle leaders' evaluation of teaching within their subjects is sometimes overgenerous. Consequently, they are not able to direct the required improvement without considerable support from senior leaders. This is an improving picture and the school's middle leaders are enthusiastic and eager to learn.
- Leaders do not routinely analyse information about behaviour and attendance as rigorously as they do information about academic progress. They do not routinely consider the attendance and behaviour of different groups of pupils. Instead, they focus on overall headline measures. Consequently, they do not target extra support as well as they could, because they are unaware of some patterns or trends. For example, although the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is not low, it is considerably lower than that of other pupils in school and it is not improving quickly. Because leaders have concentrated only on the whole-school, above-average attendance, they have not put into place well-focused strategies to improve the attendance of this group.
- Leaders and governors have commissioned effective support from the Blackfriars Teaching School Alliance. Their support for raising standards in English and mathematics has had a very positive impact on these subjects. Their support to develop middle leaders has helped several to gain greater confidence and improved skills. Support for the school commissioned by the local authority has also been effective. This has focused on providing challenge to leaders and also on ensuring that governors have a clear understanding of the school's effectiveness.

Governance of the school

- Governors know the school very well indeed. The governing body's chair and two vice-chairs meet with the headteacher every fortnight to discuss aspects of the school's performance. All governors are linked to subjects or areas of work such as provision for SEN and safeguarding. They visit the school regularly and spend time with middle and senior leaders, scrutinising their work. Consequently, governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well. They provide helpful support and strong challenge to leaders. They have been a key factor in the school's recent improvement.

- The governing body regularly reflects on and evaluates its own effectiveness. It changes the way it operates in response to any weakness it finds. For example, having commissioned a review of governance which suggested that the governing body's curriculum committee had too wide a remit, governors set up a standards committee. This has provided them with a sharper and more detailed focus on issues relating to pupils' outcomes.
- Governors conduct an annual audit of governors' skills to check that they have sufficient expertise. They then seek to fill any gaps with external perspectives, for example from local authority representatives, as necessary. Consequently, governors can check information provided to them and are not over reliant on school leaders.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leadership of this area is meticulous. Policies and procedures are clear. Child protection records are detailed, well organised and stored securely.
- Staff understand their responsibility to keep pupils safe. Leaders have provided comprehensive training for staff and, consequently, they are confident to pass on any concerns that they might have about pupils. Relationships with outside agencies are strong and leaders make appropriate use of them.
- The quality of pastoral care for all pupils, especially vulnerable pupils, is a strength of the school. Pupils recognise and appreciate the care and support that they receive from teachers and other adults in school. All parents who responded to a recent school survey said that their children are safe in school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching has improved considerably over the last two years. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated. Teachers know their subjects well. They routinely use information about what pupils already understand, know and can do when planning activities. Consequently, most lessons now provide an appropriate level of challenge for all pupils, including the most able.
- Most teachers use questioning skilfully. They check that pupils understand the work they are doing. They expect pupils to provide full and detailed responses to questions, helping them to extend or refine answers that are brief or incorrect. This helps to deepen pupils' understanding of their work.
- Relationships are positive in almost all classrooms. Teachers know their pupils well, including their ability level and any individual needs that they have. Pupils trust their teachers. As a result, they are happy to attempt new or challenging work, secure in the knowledge that they have their teachers' full support.
- The teaching of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is highly effective. Teachers use detailed information about these pupils to plan appropriate tasks. Teaching assistants provide skilful help in class. They also provide extra help for any pupil who needs it at other times. Consequently, these pupils achieve well.

- Leaders, teachers, and teaching assistants promote reading well. All pupils read regularly in school and are encouraged to do so outside of school. Pupils who join the school with weak reading skills are provided with high-quality support and they make strong progress. The school's nurture groups help pupils with low prior attainment in Years 7 and 8 to improve their basic skills. For example, inspectors observed skilful phonics teaching in Year 8 which contributed well to improving pupils' reading.
- A little weaker teaching persists in pockets around the school. When this is the case, teachers do not check pupils' understanding in lessons and so are sometimes unaware that they are struggling. Teachers are too accepting of brief or cursory answers to questions. Although they try to plan activities that provide stretch and challenge, they do not actually extend pupils' understanding at all, because the activities are poorly designed. Occasionally, when pupils are allowed to choose the difficulty level of the work they do, they choose work that is too easy for them. This also fails to extend pupils' understanding of their work.
- Teaching in the sixth form is consistently strong. It does not share the weaknesses which are occasionally apparent in the main school. Students benefit from small classes taught by expert teachers. They are extremely well supported.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are generally confident and articulate. They have good attitudes to learning and are keen to do well.
- Pupils feel safe in school. All pupils who spoke with inspectors confirmed that this is the case. They said that bullying is rare and that they trust the school's adults to deal with any bullying that does happen. Pupils value the support which the school provides for them and they feel well cared for by teachers and other adults in school.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe from a range of potential dangers. A weekly personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme runs in key stage 3, key stage 4 and the sixth form. It teaches pupils and students how to keep themselves safe, for example when using the internet. Consequently, pupils have a well-developed understanding of e-safety issues and know exactly how to stay safe online.
- A well-planned programme of careers advice now helps pupils to make informed decisions about subject choices in key stage 4 and career paths after Year 11. Almost all pupils move to education, employment or training when they leave Year 11. However, until recently, inappropriate careers guidance meant that some pupils started A-level courses in the sixth form that were too difficult for them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Most pupils behave well in lessons. They respond quickly to their teacher's instructions and they work hard. Pupils told inspectors that behaviour is usually good in class. A little low-level disruption of lessons remains, when teaching is weak, but this is rare.
- More serious incidents of poor behaviour are very rare indeed. Leaders use exclusion appropriately, as a sanction of last resort. The school's use of fixed-term exclusion is consistently below that seen nationally in secondary schools.
- The school is calm throughout the day. Pupils behave well at breaktime, lunchtime and as they move around the school. They are courteous and polite to adults. They show respect for each other and for the school's buildings. For example, at the end of lunchtime, there is very little litter to be seen around the school site.
- Most pupils enjoy school and attendance is consistently higher than the national average for secondary schools. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils, although not low, lags behind that of other pupils in school. Leaders' attempts to improve this are seeing some impact, but improvement is slow.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary. Students attend regularly and are very well motivated to succeed. They provide strong role models for younger pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 now make good progress in almost all subjects, including English and mathematics. Leaders have successfully eliminated the underachievement that was reported in the previous inspection report. This is the case for the most able pupils and for middle-ability pupils.
- Published information about GCSE outcomes in 2017 showed that pupils made similar progress, from their different starting points, as other pupils nationally in almost all subjects. Progress was strongest in the humanities subjects of history and geography and it was also good in English, mathematics, computing, languages, art and physical education. Progress was weaker in a small number of subjects, including science.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities make strong progress in all years. The curriculum meets their needs and teachers and other adults provide high-quality support in lessons and at other times.
- The least able pupils, some of whom have SEN and/or disabilities, also make strong progress. They study appropriate courses and are very well supported by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Disadvantaged pupils still make slower progress than other pupils, both nationally and in the school. However, the picture is improving. Published outcomes for these pupils improved markedly in 2017. The school's assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates a continuing trend of improvement, especially in Years 7 and 8.

- Pupils read regularly and widely in school. Those who join the school with weak reading skills quickly catch up because of expert help and support from teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils' progress in science is improving but lags a little behind other subjects. The department has experienced some instability in staffing in recent years and this has contributed to some weaker teaching.
- Sixth-form students who complete their courses make good progress in almost all subjects. This is the case for both A-level and vocational courses. However, in recent years, several students have failed to complete their A-level courses. Consequently, published value-added data for academic subjects has been poor.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Inappropriate careers guidance in Year 11 in recent years has resulted in some students taking A-level courses that were too difficult for them. Consequently, several failed to complete their course and left the sixth form. This has been the case in current Year 13 and Year 12. Leaders recognised this weakness and have addressed it for September 2018. Entry requirements have been revised for the school and across the Stafford Sixth Form Partnership. Pupils will now have to meet stricter GCSE-related criteria to embark on A-level courses.
- Work experience is well planned in the sixth form. Students are encouraged to start thinking about placements at the start of Year 12. Plans are refined throughout the year and most students obtain high-quality placements that complement their studies well. Some other aspects of non-qualification activity are less well coordinated. Although there is a wide range of opportunities available, including helping younger pupils, being a house captain and volunteering in the community, not all students take advantage of them. Consequently, for many students, non-qualification activity does not develop their personal qualities as well as it could.
- Students who complete their courses make good progress from their starting points. This is the case for academic courses, taken by most, and vocational courses, taken by far fewer students. Published value-added data for A-levels is poor because of students who have failed to complete courses. Published data for vocational courses shows progress similar to students nationally. The school's assessment information, confirmed by inspection evidence, indicates that students currently in Years 12 and 13 are making good progress because of strong teaching and high-quality support.
- Students enjoy the sixth form. All who spoke with inspectors said that they were glad that they had joined the sixth form. Attendance is similar to the main school and students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Careers guidance for students once they have joined the sixth form is effective. Support for university applications is particularly strong, but advice on other alternatives, including apprenticeships, is not neglected. Students told inspectors that they feel well supported, and all who spoke with inspectors had clear ideas about which course they were hoping to study at university. In 2017, all students who completed their course moved on to employment, higher education or training. Most moved on to university courses.

Those who failed to complete their sixth-form courses moved to other institutions, usually colleges, to study courses better suited to their abilities and interests.

- Safeguarding is effective in the sixth form. Students know how to keep themselves safe and they consider various safety issues, including sex and relationships and the effects of alcohol and drugs, in weekly tutorial lessons where PSHE is taught.
- Very few students join the sixth form without having already secured standard grade passes in both English and mathematics. Those who do join without these qualifications continue to study these subjects and retake GCSE examinations. In recent years, all have been successful in improving their GCSE grade.
- The sixth form is well led and is improving as a result. Leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching across the Stafford Sixth Form Partnership, which ensures that provision is effective regardless of where a subject is being studied. Leaders carefully track students' progress and intervene if they start to fall behind. Expectations of students are high. For example, leaders insist that students study in school when they do not have lessons.

School details

Unique reference number	124445
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10043639

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Maintained
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	711
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	51
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Witts
Headteacher	Jason Christey
Telephone number	01785 258 546
Website	www.kevi.org.uk
Email address	headteacher@kevi.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 November 2016

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is a little above average.
- The school has an average proportion of disadvantaged pupils.

- A very small number of pupils attend alternative provision at The Hollies in Stafford. These pupils are not referred to in the body of this report, because to do so would risk identifying them.
- The school's sixth form provides a range of academic and vocational courses which are taught on site, or through attendance at other providers within the Stafford Sixth Form Partnership.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' progress by the end of Year 11.
- The school receives support from the Blackfriars Teaching School Alliance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons, and most of these observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with four groups of pupils and talked to many others about their learning and their attitudes to, and opinions about, school. They observed pupils at breaktime and lunchtime and as they moved around the school.
- Inspectors visited an assembly and several morning tutor times.
- A wide range of documents were scrutinised, including information relating to governance, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, pupils' progress and the checks made on the quality of teaching.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, teachers and three governors, including the chair of the governing body.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority over the telephone.
- Inspectors took account of parents' views by considering 70 responses to a survey which the school had recently conducted. There were insufficient responses to Parent View for these to be considered.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, lead inspector

Mark Henshaw

Adele Mills

Gail Peyton

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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