

Kingsmere School

Inspection dates

20–22 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' learning is not well supported by all adults because they lack the skills and training to engage pupils in meaningful conversations about their learning. As a result, valuable learning time is lost.
- The school's system for tracking pupils' progress is in place but not yet fully embedded.
- Assessment of pupils' starting points is insufficiently rigorous and timely. As a result, learning is not well matched to pupils' needs and some pupils do not make the good progress they should.
- It is not clear if the school's assessments are accurate. The school does not test the accuracy of assessments by moderating them.
- Pupils receive feedback about their work in line with school policy but do not know how to use the feedback to make improvements. As a result, progress is not rapid or sustained enough.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunity to develop literacy skills because they are not expected to extend their writing in most curriculum subjects.
- The governing body does not challenge the headteacher to provide robust evidence about the progress that pupils in the school make from their starting points.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher provides a strong lead for others because she understands the emotional and behaviour needs of pupils well.
- The calm, well-ordered learning environment helps pupils to focus on their learning, attend school regularly and take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- The headteacher's reports to the proprietor ensure that they stay well informed about the work of the school and that line management discussions are focused on the main priorities.
- School leaders have brought about significant improvements in the learning environment and they are committed to providing the best learning context they can.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that assessments of pupils' academic progress and behaviour are rigorous so that:
 - teachers know each pupil's starting point as soon as they arrive at the school
 - assessments inform teachers' planning
 - gaps in individual pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are addressed quickly.
- Develop provision, training and skills of learning support assistants so that:
 - pupils make consistently good progress
 - learning time is used effectively
 - pupils become confident to work independently of adult support.
- Develop the skills of the governing body so that governance provides support and challenge to the headteacher to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress.

The school must meet the following independent school standards

- The proprietor must ensure that the teaching at the school:
 - enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase their understanding and develop their skills in the subjects taught
 - involves well-planned lessons and effective teaching methods, activities and management of class time
 - shows a good understanding of aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils, and ensures that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons
 - demonstrates that a framework is in place to assess pupils' work regularly and thoroughly and use information from that assessment to plan teaching so that pupils can progress(paragraph 3, 3(a), 3(c), 3(d), 3(g)).
- The proprietor must ensure that persons with leadership and management responsibilities at the school:
 - demonstrate good skills and knowledge appropriate to their role so that the independent school standards are met consistently
 - fulfil their responsibilities effectively so that the independent school standards are met consistently(paragraph 34(1), 34(1)(a), 34(1)(b)).

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The headteacher is ambitious for the school. The school's ethos is exemplified by her commitment to meeting the social, behavioural and academic needs of the pupils at Kingsmere.
- School leaders routinely monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The responsibility for bringing about improvement rests almost solely on the headteacher because the school has little additional capacity. This means that the rate of improvement in the quality of planning by instructors does not receive sufficient attention.
- The headteacher adopted a strategic approach to re-establishing the school as a place of learning following changes in proprietors, the school site and organisation of the school. As a result, the school has developed coherent systems and practices since January 2016.
- In the past year, the proprietor has ensured that the headteacher has had regular meetings with her line manager. This has helped her to focus on key priorities for development, such as improving and embedding the school's new approach to assessment and tracking. The headteacher has adjusted her approach as a result and has made the assessment system more widely understood by instructors and governors.
- The school has introduced a regular assessment and tracking system, matched to national curriculum expectations, to monitor pupils' progress. At this stage, school leaders do not check the accuracy of assessments. As a result, it is not clear whether the judgements of pupils' progress are valid.
- During the transition to the current proprietor, school leaders have lacked urgency in building the skills that classroom assistants require to support learning. As a result, pupils do not get the help that they need consistently.
- From January 2018, school leaders have assumed responsibility for the school budget. Plans are already in hand to ensure that they seek the advice and support from the Priory Group finance department.

Governance

- Governors have roles within the proprietorial body, which in practice means that the governors are involved in providing additional monitoring capacity for the headteacher.
- School leaders acknowledge that the current governance structure does not fully meet the needs of the school. While plans are in hand to change this structure, at the time of this inspection these plans were at an early stage.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils in the school feel safe because they are well supervised throughout the school day.

- The school carries out rigorous risk assessments to ensure pupil safety on the site.
- Pupils are confident that they could talk to the adults who support them if they have a concern.
- Pupils are closely, and appropriately, supervised throughout the day inside the building and in outdoor play areas.
- The school's recruitment practices and checks on the suitability of staff are rigorous.
- Staff are well trained and know how to make referrals about pupils' well-being if required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Additional adults in the classroom do not provide effective support for pupils because they are not trained to help pupils practise and consolidate their learning. Because of limited teaching capacity in the school, parts of lessons are supervised by teaching assistants. Evidence during the inspection showed that, as a result, learning stalls when the teacher is working with another class.
- While the school carries out some baseline testing to determine pupils' starting points, it is insufficiently diagnostic. As a result, learning activities do not match individual learning needs consistently well and too many pupils do not make rapid progress in lessons over time.
- Pupils receive regular feedback from their teacher about their work. Pupils are not sufficiently clear what they need to do to improve and, as a result, progress is not secure in some subjects and for some pupils.
- In English lessons, pupils are encouraged to write at greater length and some are starting to do so with confidence. In other curriculum subjects, sustained writing and use of subject-specific vocabulary are less well developed.
- The teachers have good knowledge of the subjects they teach but, as acknowledged by the headteacher, additional training is required to bring planning of lessons and the teaching skills of instructors up to the standard she expects.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning because they understand the school's expectations and the staff know them well.
- The headteacher plans learning activities that engage and maintain the interest of pupils at both key stage 3 and key stage 4. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic and confident participants in the learning activities which she leads.
- The headteacher chooses learning resources with care so that they are relevant to what is being studied and of interest to pupils. For example, she has used graphic novels such as 'Great Expectations' and, as a result, pupils who lack confidence in reading engage well with the texts and are able to analyse characters from the books.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.

- Pupils make strong progress from their starting points in emotional development and behaviour. This is because they attend school regularly and are supported by a skilled teacher.
- The school has increasingly worked in partnership with pupils' parents and carers to ensure that pupils complete their homework. Pupils who require additional support or practice are given additional resources to complete the work in the evenings.
- To support the curriculum, the school organises regular trips to local museums, such as the Fitzwilliam Museum or the Computer Museum in Cambridge. A visit to a local courtroom formed part of the school's focus on British values and an outing to the Sizewell energy complex complemented work in science and design technology.
- Pupils were quick to tell the inspector that the core value of Kingsmere School is respect. In discussion, they showed that they understand that it is important to respect and be respected, but that responsibilities are also linked to respect.
- Pupils have planned how to design and promote the products generated from their beehive as part of a whole-school project. They are planning to set up a small business to generate income for school activities on a small scale.
- Preparations for the next stage in education, employment or training start early. Pupils in Year 8 are starting to think about possible vocational or academic pathways. Careers advice and guidance for Year 10 pupils help them to prepare for applying for college or preparing for a job interview.
- The school helps pupils to access work and study experiences outside the school so that they develop social skills.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The school environment is calm and, as a result, pupils settle quickly to their learning.
- Pupils understand the school's expectations of their behaviour. They value the school's system for rewarding pupils' effort and progress in learning. For example, pupils like to earn privileges, and are motivated to respond quickly and positively to requests and instructions.
- Pupils who are new to the school adjust quickly to meet expectations about their behaviour. They are helped by fellow pupils who know and understand the Kingsmere 'way', based on mutual respect for one another.
- Pupils become more confident learners over time because the staff offer them regular reassurance and support. The small scale of the school and the knowledge of each individual pupil ensure that the pupils settle quickly to their learning.
- Pupils understand that they make choices about their behaviour. The school's system allows pupils to make positive choices and pupils increasingly regulate their own behaviour. Disruption to learning rarely happens. School behaviour records show only a small number of reported incidents in the past year.
- At lunchtime, the dining room is calm and teaching assistants model good behaviour for pupils. Pupils are responsible for preparing their own lunches. They take responsibility for washing up and tidying away after lunch.

- Attendance at the school is well above national averages and improving. Pupils want to attend lessons and they enjoy being at the school.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- A number of pupils enter the school mid-year and their prior attendance at school has often been disrupted. Most pupils entering the school have poor literacy skills.
- By the end of key stage 4, most pupils meet the school's expectation that they will sit GCSE or functional skills examinations in English, mathematics and science. Increasingly, pupils achieve qualifications in functional skills.
- Weaknesses in the school's tracking of pupils' progress, particularly relating to their starting points, make it difficult to know how much progress is made over time.
- Inspection evidence shows that pupils generally make expected progress in relation to their starting points. The rate of progress accelerates as pupils become more confident. In literacy, for example, pupils are starting to write extended pieces of work and use a range of vocabulary.
- Pupils read regularly with staff and parents. Pupils at key stage 3 do not understand what they read consistently because they have gaps in their knowledge of the vocabulary.
- Pupils take good advantage of the wide range of options on offer through the curriculum to consider, and make informed choices about, their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Pupils respond positively to the advice and guidance for their futures and are suitably prepared for the next stage in their education. For example, pupils become confident at applying for college and for job interviews.

School details

Unique reference number	131260
DfE registration number	873/6039
Inspection number	10006069

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Type of school	Other independent special school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	6
Number of part-time pupils	None
Proprietor	Priory Education Services Ltd
Chair	Michelle Smith
Headteacher	Lynne Keating
Annual fees	Information on request
Telephone number	01354 610 503
Website	www.priorychildrensservices.co.uk/find-a-location/kingsmere-school-cambridgeshire
Email address	Lynne.Keating@priorygroup.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Kingsmere School provides education for boys who have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Some pupils have attention deficit and hyperactive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder or attachment disorder.
- From January 2016, the school offered places for up to 12 boys aged from 11 to 16.
- At the time of this inspection, two pupils had been in the school for four terms and the remainder since the start of the current academic year.

- The school makes use of a local sports centre for weekly physical education and sports lessons, and the beehive within the school garden.
- The school staff consists of the full-time headteacher, three part-time instructors and three teaching assistants.

Information about this inspection

- The school was given one day's notice of the inspection.
- The inspector observed lessons in key stages 3 and 4 and scrutinised pupils' work.
- Meetings took place with the proprietor's representative, the regional operations director for the Priory Group, the headteacher and teaching assistants.
- Discussion also took place with five pupils.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, to be reported on. The inspector considered parents' comments, which are part of termly reviews of pupils' progress.
- The inspector took into account two questionnaires completed by staff.
- A range of documents related to the school's work were scrutinised, including evidence of pupils' progress, attendance registers, policies and records relating to pupils' behaviour.
- The inspector considered the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. In discussions with leaders, teaching staff and pupils, the inspector checked that these procedures are understood.
- Documents relating to the school's curriculum, such as schemes of work and choice of resources, were considered.
- The inspector observed pupils as they arrived at school, during lunchtime and at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Jenny Carpenter, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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