

# Keswick School

Vicarage Hill, Keswick, Cumbria, CA12 5QB

**Inspection dates** 4–5 February 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	<b>Outstanding</b>	<b>1</b>
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is an outstanding school.

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, first-rate teaching, students' excellent attitudes to learning and knowledgeable governance all combine to make Keswick School outstanding.
- Students make rapid progress. Their achievement is outstanding and they attain standards which are well above average at the end of Year 11.
- The sixth form is outstanding. A well above average proportion of students achieve the highest A Level grades and successfully find jobs or win places at the university of their choice.
- Teachers are highly knowledgeable and have tremendous enthusiasm for their subjects. Their high expectations and use of varied and interesting resources ensure students are challenged to achieve their best whilst really enjoying learning.
- In a few lessons students' progress, although still good, is not quite as rapid because teachers' questioning does not always challenge them to think deeply.
- Leadership and management at all levels is outstanding and has been instrumental in both maintaining high standards and bringing about improvements in teaching and in students achievement. Staff feel valued, hugely well supported and morale is high.
- Any weaknesses in the school's work are quickly tackled. The current focus on improving boys' literacy in all subjects is already having an impact but has yet to be consistently reinforced in all lessons.
- Keswick School is a place where all students, including those who live in the boarding house, thrive and become mature adults who are extremely well prepared for their future lives.
- Students' behaviour is outstanding and they feel entirely safe in school. They relish taking responsibility and contributing to the community. For example, hundreds of students undertake hundreds of hours of volunteer work as fund raisers, coaches, mentors and friends.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 40 lessons and part-lessons of which four were joint observations with the headteacher and senior staff. Inspectors listened to students read.
- Discussions were held with parents, students, staff and governors.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at students' books, progress data, safeguarding information and other documentation.
- responses to the on-line questionnaire, 'Parent View', were considered as well as those from school staff.

## Inspection team

Ann Ashdown, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Garry Kelly	Additional Inspector
Catherine Laing	Additional Inspector
Patrick Hargreaves	Additional Inspector
Paul Rafferty	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is similar in size to the average-sized secondary school. It became an Academy on 1 July 2011, immediately before the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority, for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those from service families, is well below average.
- A below average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, whilst an average proportion speaks English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action is well below average as is the proportion supported at school action plus and with a statement of special educational needs.
- A very small number of students temporarily attend off-site provision at the West Cumbria Achievement Zone. Nine Year 11 students attend vocational courses at the Lakes College.
- The school was awarded specialist status in science and mathematics in 2003.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has a boarding house for 50 students. This was inspected separately in July 2013 and the report is published on the Ofsted website.
- The headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further increase the proportion of teaching that is outstanding by;
  - ensuring students' literacy skills, particularly those of boys, continue to be developed in all lessons
  - consistently asking probing questions which challenge students to think deeply and further extend their understanding of complex ideas.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students enter the school with attainment which is above average. They make rapid progress as they move through the school and both at the end of Year 11 and Year 13 standards are significantly above those found nationally. Work in students' books and the school's own progress data all confirm the excellent progress students are making.
- Results in GCSE examinations have been significantly above average for the last three years both overall and in mathematics and English. The most able pupils achieve very well. In 2013 significantly above average numbers of students achieved the highest A\* and A grades in French, German, history, mathematics and religious education.
- Students are not entered early for GCSE examinations.
- In the sixth form students continue to make excellent progress and achieve highly. In 2013 37% of A Level entries were graded A\* and A and 66% were graded A\*, A and B, both figures being well above national averages.
- Extra funds such as the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding are spent very wisely. A raft of sharply focused strategies to provide extra help for students ensures that those who are eligible for free school meals now make rapid progress. A small gap between their attainment and that of their peers (approximately half a GCSE grade in English and mathematics) has narrowed rapidly.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make excellent progress, as do those students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language. Students receive very well targeted and sensitive help and support if and when this is needed from teachers, teaching assistants and well trained sixth form students who act as subject coaches and mentors.
- Students have very good literacy and numeracy skills. Reading skills are developed very well. The school responded very quickly to a slight concern about boys' literacy skills by making the development of these skills a whole school priority. This is already having a positive impact in many lessons but has yet to be consistently applied in all subjects.
- The progress of students who attend off-site provision is very carefully monitored. They attend regularly and behave well, are kept safe and make very good progress in their learning.

### The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Almost half of lessons seen during the inspection were outstanding. Teaching is consistently at least good. The quality of work and teachers' marking seen in students' books confirms that this consistently high quality of teaching, in both the main school and the sixth form, enables students to make excellent progress.
- Teachers have the highest expectation of what students can achieve. They are extremely knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Many teachers use the experience and skills they have gained in other fields, such as journalism, medicine and engineering to enliven lessons, provide excellent careers advice and make learning relevant to real life situations.
- Numerous examples could be given of lessons in which all groups of students made rapid progress in response to excellent teaching. The list below is a brief selection;
  - Year 9 students confidently worked in groups to evaluate the need for a greenhouse by devising experiments to measure the effect of light intensity on the rate of photosynthesis in tomato plants
  - Year 7 students thoroughly enjoyed learning how to tell the time in German as they performed a 'ballet' (to the music of the Blue Danube Waltz) using their arms to mimic the hands of the clock
  - Sixth form students reached high levels of attainment studying the text of 'The Rivals'. Skilful

teacher questioning enabled them to clearly understand complex ideas such as 'comedy of manners' and develop an understanding of contemporary Georgian characterisation and satirical comment

- In a citizenship lesson, skilled and perceptive teaching allowed students to develop excellent social and moral understanding of the nature of assertiveness and the importance of maintaining consideration for others
- In an interesting and creative history lesson about why the witch craze was so influential, students enjoyed a mixed diet of independent work, paired and group learning tasks which fully challenged the thinking of all groups of students, including the most able.
- In lessons where students' progress is good rather than outstanding, this is often because teachers' questioning is not quite as probing and perceptive. Consequently students' thinking is less deep and their understanding of more complex ideas is slightly less well developed.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**

- Students have excellent attitudes to learning. Behaviour is outstanding. Staff empower students to take control of their own learning and they rise to this challenge because they are extremely keen to succeed. Students are given excellent opportunities to learn independently through researching in -depth topics of their choice. They gain national qualifications in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form which recognise the high quality of this work.
- Students thrive in a school which places a high value on contributing to their school, local, national and international communities. The range of volunteer work which students undertake is immense and ranges from an overseas 'World Challenge' in Cambodia to raising funds for the local mountain rescue team.
- Within the school, sixth formers play a major role as skilled subject coaches, mentors and friends to younger students. Their mature approach enables them to provide a 'bridge' between younger students and the teaching staff. In a sixth form coaching session the help given ranged from listening to a young student read to giving advice to an older student of how to gain an A\* in GCSE mathematics.
- At Keswick School age is not a barrier to sharing expertise and friendship. Students of all ages readily work together, for example, on whole school dramatic and artistic projects and at lunch-time clubs.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Students say how very safe they feel in school.
- Students have a very keen awareness of how to keep themselves safe whilst not being afraid to take sensible risks. They are extremely knowledgeable about different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and are confident that should any bullying take place in school, it would be swiftly and effectively dealt with.
- Of the large number of parents who responded to the on-line parental questionnaire, 99% would recommend the school to another parent and are entirely happy with the education their children receive. However a parental concern about the school's support for individual students was followed up rigorously by inspectors. Exemplary records show that staff provide excellent support for students in their care and have a first-rate knowledge of the needs of individual students.
- Students are punctual to school, attendance is high and exclusions are very rare.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exemplary. The wealth of opportunities they are given to visit other countries, discover other cultures and the high quality of teaching in religious education, ethics and philosophy all contribute to this strength of the school's work. Very imaginative, regular assemblies provide an uplifting start to the school day.

**The leadership and management are outstanding**

- The headteacher provides outstanding leadership for the school. His industriousness and the way in which he both empowers and supports staff and students were qualities mentioned frequently by students, staff, parents and governors alike. He has excellent support from talented senior and middle managers who contribute greatly to developing a community ethos in both the main school and the sixth form, where all feel valued and first-rate teaching and excellent attitudes to learning can flourish.
- School self-evaluation is robust and accurate and small weaknesses are quickly tackled. The performance of staff is carefully monitored and excellent opportunities for further development of teachers' skills are provided.
- The school is a strategic partner in the Western Lakes Teaching School Alliance and was formerly was a training school. As such it plays a leading role in sharing its expertise with other local primary and secondary schools. As an Academy the school engages professional support from outside agencies to meet its needs.
- All students are given excellent equal opportunities to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated. Not only are those who need extra help with their work particularly well supported, but any student who has an idea for a course, a club or a school visit is given every encouragement to make their idea become a reality.
- The curriculum exceeds students' needs. The fantastic wealth of courses, visits and enrichment opportunities the school offers ensures all students make excellent progress in their learning. The curriculum also ensures students' skills and talents in activities ranging from fell running to fencing, ping pong to politics, creative writing to catering and drone building to drama are all equally encouraged.
- The sixth form curriculum is excellent. Sixth formers are particularly well prepared for future employment and higher education through the outstanding programme of study they are given. They take full advantage of a myriad of opportunities to take responsibility and consequently make a major contribution to the success of the school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are fully in place. All staff are extremely well trained and very knowledgeable about risk assessment and child protection procedures.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a wide range of expertise which they use to very good effect in leading and managing the school. They are extremely knowledgeable about data on the school's academic performance, the quality of teaching and how staff performance is managed and good teachers rewarded. They monitor spending, such as that of pupil premium funding, extremely carefully and ensure that it has an impact on students' achievement. Finances are very well managed. Governors visit the school regularly, observe lessons and attend senior leadership meetings. They provide high levels of both challenge and support for the headteacher and school staff.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	136902
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	440908

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.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in the sixth form</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1112
<b>Of which, number on roll in sixth form</b>	245
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sarah Peck
<b>Headteacher</b>	Simon Jackson
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 July 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01768 772605
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