

John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form

Inspection report

Unique reference number	116975
Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	312466
Inspection dates	16 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Rashida Sharif HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	1,173
6 th form	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Karen Frost
Headteacher	Mr Nigel Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	2–5 February 2004
School address	Ledbury Road Ross-on-Wye Herefordshire HR9 7ET
Telephone number	01989 764358
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, particularly those of boys in English; the consistency of checks made on the students' work at all levels; the curriculum provision; the impact of specialist status and the various Quality Marks in improving the quality of education; teaching and learning; and the quality of leadership and management of subject and pastoral teams. The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, a scrutiny of students' work, assessment data, the process of setting targets and meetings with the chair of governors, groups of students and school leaders. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail. There was no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, given in its self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre is a larger than average secondary school which serves a largely semi-rural area. The school has 17 named partner primary schools and a further eight from outlying areas, including out of county. About half of the students travel to school by bus. The majority of students come from socially advantaged homes. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. Very few students are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average and this has increased since the last inspection. Students' attainment on entry to the school at the age 11 is broadly average. In 2002, the school became a specialist technology college. Since then, it has been successful in gaining further specialisms in modern foreign languages and vocational provision. The school has also been successful in gaining a number of Quality Marks, for example, Investors in People, Charter Mark, Arts Mark Gold, Healthy School Award, Sports Mark, Special Educational Needs and the British Council International school awards, which have contributed significantly to students' life experiences in the school.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

John Kyrle High is an outstanding school and Sixth Form Centre. It is a vibrant and dynamic school that has not stood still since the last inspection. The school judges its overall effectiveness to be good but, because so much of its work is exemplary, inspectors judge it to be outstanding. The active involvement of the staff, governors, parents and students in all aspects of the life and work of the school is exemplary. A key component of the headteacher's vision, shared by his senior leadership team, has been the value attached to every young person who comes to the school. The staff's knowledge of the students and familiarity with their progress is very evident. This attitude sets the tone for all the staff and the way in which they work. Parents praise the school very highly, as do students who are proud to be part of the caring and learning community. They feel 'valued as individuals, rewarded for their efforts and achievements' and supported through excellent pastoral care to achieve their best. As a result, the school faces its future of growing numbers, particularly in the sixth form, and new buildings with increased confidence and great enthusiasm.

The school's triple specialist status, which includes new vocational courses such as hair and beauty, a wider range of technology subjects, including engineering, and a good number of modern foreign languages, has had an extremely positive impact on the opportunities available to all students. This, and the numerous Quality Marks, contributes immensely to students' achievement and personal development. All students' learning is enriched by a particularly wide range of extra-curricular activities, excellent links with colleges and partner schools, and visits to other countries, for example, Uganda. These activities also contribute very well to the provision for gifted and talented students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who both do exceptionally well. Although students' attainment on entry at the age of 11 is average, they make good progress in the main school and achieve standards that are above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students from all backgrounds make good progress and reach the challenging targets set for them, although boys do not always do as well as girls in English. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress, both in relation to the targets contained in their individual education plans and in relation to the achievement of good results in their GCSE examinations. Students continue to make very good progress in the sixth form and achieve A-level results that are well above average.

The students' personal development and well-being, and their care, guidance and support, are outstanding. Students are very positive about their experiences in the school. They are extremely polite, friendly and have very positive attitudes to their learning. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. Students appreciate very much the system of rewards and believe that this has played a major role in improving classroom behaviour. Bullying is rare and students feel safe; they believe that if they had any problems, they would know who to go to for help. They feel that their suggestions and opinions matter. For example, the students identified the need for better hygiene in the toilets and a greater range of healthy food on offer in the school canteen as issues to be addressed, and there have been significant improvements in these areas. Students have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthier lives and their participation levels in physical education and a

wide range of sports activities are high. Students are very excited about the recently acquired all weather sports terrain. Students make an excellent contribution to the community. Additionally, work experience, vocational courses and enterprise activities linked to the school's specialist status prepare students particularly well for their future economic well-being. The school has worked tirelessly to improve attendance since the last inspection and this is now good.

Both parents and students commented on the 'many fine and enthusiastic teachers' at the school. The quality of teaching is good and sometimes, outstanding. Teachers have good subject knowledge and in most lessons use this well to plan interesting activities that motivate students to learn. Many lessons benefit from excellent rapport between students and teacher. Teachers often use questions to explore and extend students' understanding. Learning support assistants contribute very well to the progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. While teaching generally employs a wide range of strategies to help students achieve their potential, some do not always meet the specific needs of students, particularly boys. The best lessons challenge students to think for themselves, which they do well. Students know what they are aiming at and are encouraged to evaluate their own progress. In some lessons, however, students listen to the teacher for far too long, which slows the pace to their learning and leads to some students getting bored. Excellent practice in marking in some subjects helps students know what they have done well and what they need to do to improve if they are to meet their targets. However, this practice is not yet consistent across departments and within subjects.

The school provides an excellent curriculum, which is broad, balanced and innovative. The school has worked extremely hard to provide students with an inventive and exciting curriculum, which widens their opportunities and experiences, in and out of school. The school is committed to meeting the needs of all its students and does not shy away from providing a range of vocational courses and opportunities, as well as the more traditional academic subjects. Specialist status in technology has broadened the choice of courses and has led to technology permeating teaching and learning across the school. Modern foreign languages are available to all students at Key Stage 3 and further language options at Key Stage 4. There is a wide choice of courses in Years 10 and 11 and this is constantly under review with an increasing number of vocational courses. The sixth form curriculum offers a wide and increasing range of A-level courses, both academic and vocational.

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding for reasons, which are fully justified. There are excellent links with partner schools and other outside agencies, some of which are a consequence of the specialist functions the school has in technology and vocational provision. Subject and pastoral leaders ensure that the priorities for their areas of responsibility are correctly identified and that these contribute well to the school's overall self-evaluation and its planning for improvement. Another key component in the headteacher's vision, besides the valuing of students' individual needs in the context of a learning community, is the high expectation that students 'come to learn and to achieve'. These expectations lead to considered but rigorous approaches to school management. Planning at all levels is coherent. The senior leadership team links effectively with middle leaders who are held firmly to account, but in ways they find both professional and supportive. The headteacher and the senior leadership team have worked tirelessly

to identify and meet the specific needs of their students. Systems for monitoring the school's performance and evaluating its progress are very effective and the targets set are challenging. School governors are closely involved in the developments of the school at all levels and the future direction of the school. The chair of governors attends regular fortnightly meetings with the senior leadership team. Governors hold the school to account very effectively and know its strengths and areas for further improvements. They are currently working towards achieving Governor Quality Mark. Given the substantial developments and the achievement of students, the school is offering excellent value for money and shows very good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Provision in the sixth form is outstanding. Parents praise the sixth form centre highly. They feel that since the last inspection, and particularly in the last three years, 'the college has improved immeasurably' to become 'a well respected place of study'. The students, like their parents, believe it to be 'the best' and feel 'very proud and privileged' to be there.

The sixth form centre provides an outstanding quality of education for its students. It has made continuous improvement since its last inspection. Students enter the sixth form with attainment that is above average and make very good progress, which results in very high standards in examinations. The vast majority of students stay on in the sixth form and there are a growing number of students who choose to come from other schools. These students receive an effective induction programme which helps them to settle very quickly. The sixth form is extremely well led and provides an excellent range of suitable courses to meet the needs and interests of a range of students. Students enjoy their studies and take up significant roles in the rest of the school. They willingly give their time to mentor younger students and help in a range of during and after school clubs and activities. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers, all specialists in their subjects, are well respected, encourage students to take responsibility for their learning and promote their independent research skills. There is a regular and rigorous system for reviewing students' progress, which ensures that early support is provided for those who need it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise further the overall standards and achievement, particularly those of boys, in English through teaching that consistently supports and challenges them.
- Ensure that marking in books is consistent throughout the school and enables students to know what it is that they need to do to further improve their work.

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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.	School overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

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 effectiveness of the Foundation Stage		
The effectiveness of boarding provision		
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	1
The standards reached by learners ¹	2	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	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	2	
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	2	
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?	2	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests 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.

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 tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
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



17 January 2008

Dear Students,

Inspection of John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form, Ledbury Road, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7ET

Thank you very much for the very warm welcome you extended to my colleague and me when we visited your school in January. It was a pleasure and a privilege to come to the school and to meet with you. Thank you very much for contributing to the inspection. It is a delight to write to you and say how impressed we were with you and your school. You show great pride in the school, and rightly so. You have an excellent headteacher, whose vision continues to transform the school. He has established a school where you all feel valued, respected and where you feel safe and enjoy your lessons. The staff are very committed and enthusiastic; they believe in the school and you. There is exceptional care, guidance and support available to every student, whatever their circumstances or needs. There is an outstanding curriculum and the use of modern technology in all the classrooms is making a big difference to the quality of teaching and learning that is taking place. We, like you, think it is an outstanding school.

We were extremely impressed with your positive attitudes to learning and the way you look after each other. It is because of these positive attitudes, your exemplary behaviour and your hard work and determination that you achieve as well as you do and strive for even better results in the future. It is clear that you are very proud to be students at John Kyrle High School and Sixth Form Centre with its triple specialist status. Because of this, you have a wonderful opportunity to study a wide range of subjects and pursue additional interests in the extensive programme of out-of-hours activities.

We would particularly like to thank the school council for giving up their lunchtime to speak with us. You were very proud of your school and full of praise. Many of you told me that you felt the school was like a 'big happy family'. We had a tremendous response to the questionnaire from your parents who were also very happy and proud of the school.

In discussion with Mr Griffiths, the senior management team and the chair of governors, we have asked them to help you to further improve your English results, particularly for boys and to make sure that when teachers mark your books, they let you know what you need to do to further improve your work.

I wish you all the best for the future and look forward to hearing about your future success.

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector