

Inspection of Kennet School

Stoney Lane, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 4LL

Inspection dates: 14 May and 15 May and 12 June 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Grace Rigg. The school is part of the Equinox 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, Gemma Piper, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Mike Cole.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils attend a school that is inclusive and understands them as individuals. The house system is a strength of the school and fosters a strong sense of belonging. Pupils enthusiastically take up the extensive range of extra-curricular activities offered. These opportunities help foster a sense of community.

Pupils, including those in the sixth form, know their teachers want them to succeed at the highest level. They respond to this ambition by working hard. Consequently, pupils produce work of exceptional quality. They learn very well and achieve highly.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported extremely well. The school has made sure teachers have detailed information to help pupils overcome their individual barriers to learning. Teachers use this information to carefully craft adaptations to their teaching. Consequently, pupils with SEND progress through the curriculum successfully. They produce work that is of equally high quality to their peers. Pupils who attend the school's specially resourced provision for pupils with SEND are fully integrated into the life of the school.

Pupils are happy and safe. They understand that only the highest standards of conduct are acceptable. Pupils learn in mostly calm and purposeful classrooms. However, some pupils' learning is disrupted by occasional chatter and off-task behaviour from a minority of pupils.

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

The school has designed a highly ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils. A broad suite of subjects helps pupils foster a hunger for learning, interest and curiosity. Teachers explain important knowledge with clarity. They use excellent examples, to show pupils how to craft high-quality responses. This enables pupils to analyse and think deeply about what they are learning. Teachers regularly check what pupils know and their readiness to move on. This means pupils, including those with SEND, develop a rich and complex understanding of key ideas and knowledge.

The school's approach to reading is impressive. Pupils read every morning and have a wide genre of books to choose from. The 'Kennet Canon' sets out a list of books pupils will read throughout their time in school. Pupils access an increasingly challenging set of texts from Years 7 to 13. These texts challenge pupils' thinking and raise their aspirations. Pupils use the books to share and celebrate the diversity of life in modern Britain. The stories help them to understand important values, like tolerance and respect. Pupils with weaker reading skills receive high-quality, targeted support. This helps them overcome their individual barriers to reading. Consequently, they develop into confident and fluent readers.

The school has worked hard to secure high standards of pupils' conduct. This has led to a generally positive culture within the school. Most pupils behave extremely

well. Most learning proceeds without disruption. However, some pupils disengage from learning and participate in off-task chatter. This can interrupt other pupils' learning. In most cases, staff pick this up and deal with it quickly. However, not all adults respond to this type of behaviour with the consistency the school and the majority of pupils expect. The school is relentless in its work to raise levels of pupils' attendance. Staff work closely with the most vulnerable pupils and their families. This is beginning to ensure better and more regular attendance for all pupils.

Pupils benefit from impressive pastoral care and personal development programmes. The school has placed a strong emphasis on responsible relationships and individual safety. It offers tailored support and signposting for pupils' well-being and care. Highly effective careers advice and guidance helps many pupils move on and succeed in their chosen paths. Pupils understand the world around them. This means that pupils are ready to become independent and responsible citizens.

The school's enrichment offer enables pupils to access exciting and new experiences. Pupils and parents have high regard for the commitment of staff who provide these opportunities, such as coding, choirs, sports and drama. Pupils take up the offer with enthusiasm. As a result, they develop new interests and foster existing talents. Whole school events, such as the triathlon and 'whatever it takes' events, enhance the strong relationships between staff and pupils of all ages. Sixth-form students get involved enthusiastically in the life of the school. They enjoy taking on leadership responsibilities and are proud to be seen as role models for younger pupils.

Staff are proud to work at the school. They feel supported and value leaders' mindfulness of their workload and well-being. New staff and early career teachers are supported very well. The school provides staff with thoughtfully designed training. This helps staff teach the curriculum with the exceptional quality which pupils enjoy. Governors and trust members are very ambitious for the school. They provide effective, rigorous challenge and support to leaders to ensure continuous improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- A minority of staff do not always apply the agreed policy and procedures for managing pupils' behaviour. This makes it difficult for some pupils to understand how to meet the school's high expectations. Consequently, some learning is disrupted by off-task behaviour that teachers do not always respond to effectively. The school should ensure all staff apply these policies consistently well.

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	136647
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10296357
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1877
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	328
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mike Cole
CEO of trust	Gemma Piper
Headteacher	Grace Rigg
Website	www.kennetschool.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	1 and 2 November 2022 under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is part of the Equinox Learning Trust.
- The school uses three unregistered alternative providers of education.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 11 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for pupils with education and health and care plans who have hearing impairments and physical disabilities.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspection started on 14 May 2024. Inspectors returned on 12 June 2024 to gather additional evidence in line with [Ofsted inspections and visits: Deferring, pausing and gathering additional evidence](#) policy.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met representatives from the trust board, including the chair of local governing body and trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, science, computer science, geography and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To further inspect the curriculum inspectors reviewed the plans to support disadvantaged pupils, looked at their work and visited an additional sample of lessons.
- 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.
- Inspectors talked to groups of pupils, both formally and informally, at break and lunchtimes.
- Staff views were sought through discussions and the staff survey.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Ofsted Parent View.

Inspection team

Julie Summerfield, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector (14 and 15 May)
Ginny Rhodes	Ofsted Inspector (14 and 15 May)
Mike Serridge	Ofsted Inspector (14 and 15 May)

Richard Carlyle	Ofsted Inspector (14 and 15 May)
Jason Philipsz	Ofsted Inspector (14 and 15 May)
Dave Gibson, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector (12 June)
Dave Gilkerson	His Majesty's Inspector (12 June)

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