

# The King's School

Elmfield, Ambrose Lane, Harpenden, Hertfordshire AL5 4DU

## Inspection dates

6–8 December 2016

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
Effectiveness of leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	<b>Good</b>
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	<b>Outstanding</b>
Outcomes for pupils	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	<b>Good</b>

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school

- The school's leaders and trustees have maintained the good standard of education achieved at the time of the previous inspection.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge and pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning ensure that pupils make good progress from their different starting points.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress.
- The school's most-able pupils achieve well as a result of typically good teaching.
- Pupils are exceptionally well cared for and nurtured to develop as responsible members of the school community.
- A strong Christian ethos permeates the school and the school promotes fundamental British values well, which prepare pupils very well for life in modern democratic Britain.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and attendance is above average. They are rightly proud of their school.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils enjoy a good range of clubs and additional activities which enhance their education.
- Children make good progress in the early years provision and are kept safe due to the effective leadership.
- Some pupils do not know how well they are achieving because a few teachers do not adhere to the school's marking policy.
- A small amount of teaching does not meet the needs of individual pupils as well as it should, which stalls their progress.
- Partnership work between this school and other schools is not commonplace. Additionally, the good practice that exists within the school is not always shared.
- Some systems for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the work of the school are not fully embedded. This includes the management of teachers' performance.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent standards') and associated requirements.

## Full report

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

- Make teaching and pupils' outcomes outstanding, by:
  - ensuring that all teaching matches the needs of individual pupils so that more pupils make rapid progress from their starting points
  - making sure that pupils are quite clear about how well the staff expect them to achieve.
- Make leadership and management of the school outstanding, by:
  - formalising systems for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the work of the school, including the work of subject leaders
  - strengthening the management of teaching by sharing the very good teaching practice that exists in the school more widely
  - establishing effective partnerships with other schools
  - embedding the systems for the management of staff's performance
  - making sure that all teachers adhere to the school's marking policy so that feedback becomes more helpful to pupils, and pupils know exactly what progress they are making.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

**Good**

- Evidence gathered during the inspection demonstrates that the school's leaders ensure compliance with all of the independent school standards.
- The principal has a clear vision for the school and this is clearly shared by staff, pupils and parents. Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire are overwhelmingly supportive of the school's aims. One parent wrote: 'My child loves coming to school. The staff are caring and go above and beyond to help and look after children. There is a strong nurturing and pastoral ethos, and values such as integrity, honesty and trust are conveyed to the children as important.'
- The school's self-evaluation summary document provides an accurate account of the school's effectiveness with some good contextual examples of what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve.
- The well-thought-out school improvement plan has identified appropriate action points within a realistic timescale. It also details clearly how leaders and proprietors will measure the success of their actions.
- The school's small size means that subject teachers are often responsible for leading their subject. The subject leaders, although they say they are able to speak to senior staff when they need to, do not have scheduled meetings throughout the school year or any formal processes for them to formally evaluate the effectiveness of their subject areas.
- Communication between the school and parents is regular and informative. Pupils' progress is reported on regularly, and the school operates an open-door policy to enable parents to make their views known.
- The management of teaching has improved of late. The principal and his senior colleagues observe teachers more regularly, and records of these observations are now much more evaluative and useful than in the past. Systems for managing teachers' performance more effectively have started to be introduced, but are at an early stage of development. There is also more potential to share the good practice that exists in teaching.
- Teachers have access to a good range of resources, although some pupils told inspectors that they would like more up-to-date course books.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the needs of pupils well, which enables them to make good progress. Pupils are taught useful life skills, including cookery. There is a good range of clubs and activities, for example inspectors saw boys and girls enthusiastically taking part in a table tennis tournament in preparation for the regional heats later in the year.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. Pupils are provided with time to reflect on their actions. They work well with their peers in lessons. Fundamental British values are a strong aspect of the school's vision and ethos. As well as promoting these values through the school's curriculum, the school offers secondary-aged pupils the opportunity to take part in an annual British values day during which they take part in a wide range of activities to enable them to gain a deeper

understanding of how these values can be applied in everyday life.

- Pupils have a good understanding of faiths beyond Christianity. They learn about other religions through studying their teachings, and demonstrate a good understanding of the differences between their own faith and those of other members of British society. Pupils in the early years and the primary classes keenly took part in the annual Nativity play during the inspection, an event which was well supported by parents.
- Pupils have a good understanding of people who have protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act (2010). Even though they may have their own views, for example about same-sex relationships, they understand that people have the right to live their lives as they wish in modern British society.
- The school's leaders have not sought to work in partnership with other schools. This means they often work in isolation and are unable to discuss key issues or have their assessments validated by external bodies.

## **Governance**

- Four members of the board of trustees are responsible for the governance of the school. These members have a range of useful skills which enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.
- Minutes of meetings demonstrate that the board of trustees asks pertinent questions relating to the leadership and management of the school, pupils' safety, the quality of teaching and the progress made by pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Trustees expect to receive regular reports from the principal about the school's progress. They also seek to gather the views of parents by attending key events during the school year.
- The trustees have ensured that the school has published a suitable safeguarding policy on its website.

## **Safeguarding**

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school is committed to keeping pupils safe. All staff have received up-to-date training in safeguarding children. Leaders have ensured that all staff have received and read the latest guidance on safeguarding, 'Keeping children safe in education' (2016).
- Staff have had up-to-date training on the government's 'Prevent' duty which aims to prevent young people from being drawn into terrorist activity or becoming the victims of radicalisation.
- The designated safeguarding leads are up to date with their training. The designated lead member of staff has wisely issued all staff with a pocket-sized card which details names and contact information of key personnel should they have any concerns.
- Records relating to vulnerable pupils are well maintained, and record all actions taken with details of the resolution.
- The school operates within a culture of vigilance. In their discussions with inspectors, it

was clear that staff are suitably trained to recognise the signs of abuse and neglect. Staff build up positive relationships with parents and guardians to promote pupils' well-being.

- Some minor administrative errors were found in the recording of necessary employment checks on the single central register of the vetting of staff. These were rectified while inspectors were on-site.

## **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

**Good**

- The quality of teaching over time is good. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and, as a result of their typically high expectations, pupils respond positively and make good progress. Pupils are keen to learn, and relationships between teachers and pupils are strong.
- Teachers incorporate the teaching of literacy and numeracy effectively into their planning for learning. They use key subject terminology regularly and make constant reference to these terms throughout the lesson. Pupils are able to use these terms in oral presentations and in their written work.
- In a Year 9 history lesson on life in Tudor England, pupils of all abilities, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, made good progress because the teacher had planned carefully for everyone's needs. The teacher challenged every pupil through her highly effective questioning. One pupil was able to define in clear terms what a pendulum was, and its purpose, when he spoke about Galileo's inventions.
- Reading is taught well in lessons and pupils are actively encouraged to read by their teachers. Inspectors listened to readers from Years 2 and 7. The most able readers read with great fluency and expression, and the weaker readers make effective use of their phonics skills. Pupils choose books which are appropriate for their age, and many demonstrate their love of reading by reading fiction books at home.
- Teachers check for pupils' understanding during lessons to prevent pupils from falling behind. They use a variety of strategies, all of which are successful, to ensure that pupils have understood what they are being taught before moving on to the next stage.
- Effective teaching caters very well for the school's most able pupils. Typically, the pupils' needs are addressed well because teachers push them to try hard and to be resilient when they get things wrong. Inspectors saw the pupils being expected to start tasks at a different level than their peers, which meant they were challenged by the work they were doing. This approach secured more rapid progress and a deeper understanding of the concept the teacher was trying to get across to the class as a whole.
- Learning support assistants clearly help pupils to make good progress, although there is no formal system in place for teachers and learning support assistants to plan together for pupils' learning.
- While most teachers plan their lessons so that pupils' abilities are taken into account, a few teachers do not plan sufficiently for the least able and the most able pupils. This means that occasionally, some pupils are either not challenged enough or cannot access the work. Additionally, some teachers allow for the needs of different pupils when planning, but do not use the strategies planned for when they deliver the lesson.
- While most teachers adhere to the expectations laid down in the school's marking policy,

a few do not mark in line with the policy. Where marking is less helpful, it is hard for pupils to see how they can improve or to gauge the progress they have made.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

## Outstanding

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils told inspectors that they feel very safe when at school. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They demonstrated a strong awareness of the risks associated with the use of social networking sites.
- The small size of the school means that the pupil-to-teacher ratio is small. Consequently, teachers know their pupils well as individuals. This was clear when the lead inspector toured the school with the principal, who knew the names of individual pupils encountered, and could provide detailed information on their specific needs.
- Pupils are offered a range of responsibilities to develop their leadership skills and raise their self-esteem. Younger pupils are ably supported by their older peers who work effectively as mentors.
- The lead inspector observed a mixed tutor group of pupils comprising Years 7 to 9 choosing what they wanted to pray for that particular morning, and then saying a prayer for the topic they had identified. On that particular morning, pupils prayed for the success of their table tennis team and also for young people involved in sport who had previously been victims of child abuse when they were younger.
- The school has appropriate risk assessments in place to keep pupils safe both when in school and when participating in excursions. Inspectors scrutinised risk assessments written for educational exchange visits abroad. These were detailed, and identified all potential situations which might place pupils at risk.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is exemplary. They move around the school sensibly and with great purpose. The older pupils serve as excellent role models to their younger peers and model good behaviour.
- Behaviour and attitudes in lessons are praiseworthy. Pupils demonstrate very good listening skills, support others, and arrive at lessons well equipped so that learning can get off to a good start. Work in books is presented neatly.
- Fixed-term exclusions are rare. The school's classroom behaviour system is applied well and is known and understood by pupils. Pupils are rewarded for behaving well, and do their utmost to avoid being given any disciplinary marks by their teachers.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of different forms of bullying. They report that bullying of any kind is almost unheard of. They took inspectors through the process of how to report anything resembling bullying, and were also adamant that any bullying that

did occur would not be tolerated by staff.

- Pupils' attendance is high and above the national average, including for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Pupils' persistent absence is extremely low.

## Outcomes for pupils

**Good**

- Pupils make good progress from their different starting points as they move through the school so that they have achieved good outcomes by the time they leave.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books across all year groups and in a wide range of subjects shows that the good teaching they experience has a strong impact on their outcomes. Although not required to, pupils carry out the Year 6 national tests that are statutory in maintained schools. In 2016, test results compared favourably with other schools' attainment standards nationally. In reading, 62% of pupils made expected progress, 57% in writing and 66% in mathematics.
- The school's leaders track pupils' attainment regularly and monitor this closely. Systems are in place for forecasting pupils' achievement at the end of key stage 4 by making use of public test results and combining these with results of a cognitive abilities test. This information enables leaders to set targets for pupils' outcomes, and to track whether they are underachieving. However, not all pupils spoken to were aware of or understood their targets.
- The most able pupils make good progress, particularly when their teachers set them challenging work. They are encouraged to attempt more demanding tasks during the lesson which provide them with the opportunity to thrive. Inspectors' scrutiny of these pupils' books provided evidence to show that they typically produce longer pieces of writing. They make use of a wide range of words and are able to justify their arguments in a mature but balanced way.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress from their individual starting points. Most teachers understand their needs and monitor their work closely. They make sure that pupils can understand the work by skilfully adapting tasks set for them.
- Pupils achieved well in 2016 at the end of key stage 4, and their outcomes compared favourably with the national average. Pupils made better progress in mathematics than in English. In some instances, progress in mathematics is outstanding. The slower progress made in English was partly due to the weaker teaching they experienced in key stage 3 (which is implied in the previous inspection report). Leaders acted quickly when the current Year 11 pupils underperformed in their English examinations last year. Up-to-date information on their achievement, apparent from the very recent practice examinations taken in Year 11, shows that they have now made up the lost ground and are set to achieve well.
- Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' work across a range of years and subjects suggests that the current rate of good progress is set to continue.
- Pupils' good outcomes enable them to move on to further education at an institution of their choice. Many choose to continue their studies in school sixth forms or at a college. All pupils in the previous academic year found suitable places for the next stage of their education. Pupils receive good-quality careers guidance as they near the end of their

secondary education.

## Early years provision

**Good**

- The early years provision is good overall and there is clear evidence that it is in a strong position to continue to improve. This is due to the good leadership and effective teaching which is having a direct impact on children's positive outcomes.
- Children generally enter Nursery with skills and abilities that are typical for their age. They make good progress during their time in the early years, and the proportion who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is above average. This places them in a good position when they enter Year 1.
- The early years teaching spaces provide a bright and attractive environment for children. There is a good range of equipment available which is clearly labelled. The outdoor space is somewhat limited in size, but the early years leader ensures that children make the most of what is available. Children have access to sand and water, weighing scales and nature displays. Plans are in place to develop the outdoor space further this academic year.
- Teaching in the early years is effective and this is closely linked to accurate use of assessment, to which all staff contribute. The school's approach to assessment is developing well and staff routinely use their observations to inform their planning. Children's learning journals provide an attractive record of their progress, and there is clear evidence of the involvement of parents in their children's learning.
- The teaching of phonics is a priority and takes place every morning. Phonics is taught well to different groups, according to children's ability. Monitoring of progress in phonics is regular and robust, which means that it is quite normal for children to change group according to their rate of progress.
- The early years action plan includes the possibility of a home visit by a member of the teaching staff. It is clear that the early years staff are committed to forming good working relationships with parents, and they are planning a 'soft start' approach so that children settle in smoothly.
- Children behave well and listen to adults' instructions. They work well with each other as well as independently, and enjoy their learning.
- The area is secure. Children are kept safe in the early years provision, seen, for example, by them wearing high-visibility jackets when at play. Risk assessments are detailed, and cover all eventualities, including play in the outside area and parental access.

## School details

Unique reference number	117650
DfE registration number	919/6224
Inspection number	10020942

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	Independent day school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	4 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	172
Proprietor	Kingdom Education Ltd
Chair	David Crook
Headteacher	Clive Case
Annual fees (day pupils)	£6,462
Telephone number	01582 767566
Website	<a href="http://www.thekingsschool.com">www.thekingsschool.com</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:office@thekingsschool.com">office@thekingsschool.com</a>
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2013

## Information about this school

- The King's School is an independent evangelical Christian day school in Harpenden. The school's mission statement is, 'Young people devoted to Christ, equipped for life and prepared to reach the world'.
- The school draws pupils from a wide area, mainly from Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. It is owned by Kingdom Education Ltd and is affiliated to the Christian School's Trust. It is not affiliated to one particular church or denomination.
- The school is registered for 225 boys and girls aged between four and 16 years of age. Most pupils are of White British heritage or Black African heritage with a small proportion from South African, Australian and other backgrounds.

- The school has a below-average proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. There are no disadvantaged pupils at the school.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.

## Information about this inspection

- This inspection was conducted with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed learning across nearly every year group and across a range of subjects. Some of these observations were carried out jointly with the school's senior leaders. Inspectors also looked at the work in pupils' books.
- Meetings were held with the principal and the heads of primary, secondary and early years. Inspectors also met with subject leaders and groups of pupils. A telephone discussion was held with the chair of the trustees.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of school documentation including: the self-evaluation summary, the school improvement plan, policies, records of attendance and behaviour, and the school's single central register of vetting checks of staff.
- During the inspection, pupils in Year 11 were sitting practice examinations.
- Inspectors considered 23 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 28 responses to the staff questionnaire.

## Inspection team

John Daniell, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Helen Bailey

Ofsted Inspector

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