

The King's School

Independent school standard inspection report

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Reporting inspector	David Rzeznik HMI

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, 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.^{1, 2}

Information about the school

The King's School is an independent evangelical Christian day school in Harpenden. The school draws pupils from a wide area mainly from Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. It is owned by Kingdom Education Ltd, and it is affiliated to the Christian Schools' Trust. The school was established in Hemel Hempstead in 1982 and moved to Harpenden in 1987. It is not affiliated to one particular church or denomination. The school is registered for 225 pupils and there are currently 177 on roll, aged between four and 16 years. Ten children are in the Reception (Early Years Foundation Stage) class and they attend full-time. All are entitled to free education, until they are five-years- old, as a result of government funding. The school is multiracial with most pupils being of White or Black African heritage. None has a statement of special educational needs. This is the school's second inspection report. Its first was in November 2007.

The school's mission statement is, 'Young people devoted to Christ, equipped for life and prepared to reach the world.'

Evaluation of the school

The King's School provides a good quality of education; it fully meets its aims and meets all but one of the regulations for independent schools. The curriculum, teaching and progress are good overall but are satisfactory in Reception. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Safeguarding procedures are good and pupils are well cared for. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and the regulations that were failed during the previous inspection are now met. All health and safety policies now meet requirements and all of the required checks are made on staff before they are employed.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good overall but it is satisfactory in Reception. The primary and secondary curriculum policies provide an accurate account of the provision made.

In Years 1 to 9 pupils follow the National Curriculum and between Years 5 and 9 a modern foreign language is studied. Pupils are encouraged to continue learning

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

French or German in Years 10 and 11 but it is not compulsory. The teaching of languages helps improve pupils' linguistic skills and cultural development. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study nine or 10 GCSE subjects with a focus on English, mathematics, sciences and religious studies, plus three optional subjects. All of the older pupils are taught physical education (PE). Religious education is taught across the school using a scheme of work devised by the school. Teaching is based on biblical principles. Provision is supplemented through daily devotions, including prayer and regular assemblies which have a very positive impact on developing pupils' spiritual development. In Years 5 and 6 there is a biennial trip to an outdoor pursuit centre which enriches learning. The German and French departments organise annual trips to Bremen and Paris and pupils in Years 7 and 8 exchange pen-pal letters with pupils in these towns. Such work widens pupils' knowledge and understanding of European society. A good range of trips and visits are provided but they mainly occur before Year 10. The oldest pupils say they would like more trips and social events and inspectors endorse this view. An appropriate careers guidance programme is in place that includes work experience in Year 10. Personal, social, health and citizenship work is suitably threaded through a range of subjects and reflects the school's aims and ethos.

The Reception curriculum covers all areas of learning and is suitably broad. Curriculum planning is appropriately based on national guidance. Subject time is sometimes lost because class time is not always managed efficiently. The outdoor learning environment is small but adequate.

Teaching and assessment are good overall but are satisfactory in Reception. Provision enables pupils to make good progress in Years 1 to 11 and satisfactory progress in Reception. Where teaching is effective it is because work is challenging, stimulating and well matched to pupils' abilities. As a result, pupils learn new things and are stretched intellectually. Questioning is good and teachers adapt their teaching to fill gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Computer technology is used well to teach concepts and engage and motivate pupils to learn. Where teaching is satisfactory it is sometimes because class time is not managed properly with pupils spending time doing unproductive activities that do not add much to their learning. Lesson planning does not always ensure that work is properly matched to all pupils' abilities or does not provide enough opportunities for pupils to work independently and find things out for themselves. A good range of assessment strategies are used to determine pupils' attainment and marking is more developmental than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 are set targets to pinpoint what must be improved but targets are not routinely set in other years. While leaders have a clear picture of pupils' attainment as they move through the school, the tracking of pupils' progress is underdeveloped.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy being taught in a Christian environment and appreciate being in small classes where they get individual attention and one-to-one support. The school is a happy and

tolerant community where racial harmony is an important strength. Pupils and adults from different backgrounds get along extremely well. Pupils are keen to succeed and have very positive attitudes to learning. Their attendance is good and their behaviour is outstanding. As at the time of the last inspection pupils benefit greatly from the school's very strong Christian ethos which contributes to their outstanding spiritual and moral development. The Dawn Kids initiative, where older pupils evangelise in Latvia, helps to improve pupils' ability to work in teams and increase their empathy, concern and compassion for others. Such work also improves their skills in communicating their faith and further develops their Christian values and beliefs. Pupils have a good understanding of their own culture and there have been improvements in widening pupils' understanding of cultural diversity through, for example, exchange visits to Germany and France; work in Latvia and International Weeks where pupils study lifestyles in other countries. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and wider community, through raising funds for good causes and by school council representatives improving school facilities.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good. The school promotes a healthy lifestyle, with plenty of opportunities for physical exercise that keep pupils fit. Christian teaching plays an important role in securing pupils' emotional well-being. At the time of the last inspection the designated person for child protection had not been appropriately trained. Child protection procedures are robust and all staff, including the designated person, have been suitably trained to fulfil their child protection duties. The behaviour policy is clear about the rewards and sanction to be adopted. Effective implementation results in outstanding behaviour. Risk assessments for the premises and classroom activities are thorough and are regularly reviewed. This is an improvement since the last inspection. An adequate first aid policy is in place and accidents are satisfactorily reported. The accident reports for children clearly identify what treatment has been administered; however, this is not the case for adults.

At the time of the last inspection the anti-bullying policy and health and safety guidance for educational visits were not comprehensive enough. Weaknesses have been rectified and both frameworks meet requirements and are implemented effectively. The adult to pupil ratio is high and this ensures pupils are well supervised at all times. The school fulfils its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors

The school implements safe recruitment procedures and carries out all of the required checks on the suitability of staff, volunteers and members of the proprietorial body to work with children. The very recently updated single central register contains all of the required information.

Premises of and accommodation at the school

The school is housed in a former sanatorium that is leased from the National Children's Home Action for Children. Facilities enable effective learning and keep pupils safe. Classrooms, offices and specialist accommodation are of an appropriate size. They are clean, tidy and are maintained appropriately. A satisfactory medical room is used when pupils are ill. The school grounds are extensive and there is plenty of outdoor space for play and recreation.

Provision of information

The prospectus contains all of the required information for parents and others. Information is clear and accurate. Channels of communication are very good and parents and carers hold the school in high regard. Regular parental consultation evenings and newsletters keep families and friends of the school up-to-date about school life. Annual reports to parents and carers provide a clear evaluation of their children's attainment and progress in the main subjects taught.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The written complaints procedure is clear, fair and meets regulatory requirements.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The effectiveness of Reception provision and the outcomes are satisfactory. The teacher is new and started teaching the class in September 2010. Children enter with basic skills that are at least in line with the expectations for their age and sometimes above, especially in speaking and listening. They make satisfactory progress. Some individuals make good progress in some areas; however, learning is not consistently good.

Provision is satisfactory. The key strengths are that staff offer lots of praise and value children's efforts. This boosts children's confidence and self-esteem. There is a warm and caring ethos and children feel safe and secure. Lesson planning is inconsistent. Adult-led activities are suitably planned; however, the planning for child-initiated learning is not sharp enough. For example, planning does not make sufficiently explicit what learning objectives and key skills are being learned in child-chosen activities. The balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning is not always quite right. At times adults control learning too much with limited opportunities for children to find things out for themselves. Satisfactory assessment procedures are in place but assessment information is not always used effectively to ensure work is matched to children's capabilities. On occasions the strategies used to control individual's behaviour are not effective. Consequently, learning is disrupted and inappropriate actions are not 'nipped in the bud' quickly enough.

The outdoor area is small and the lack of a covered area limits the free flow of activities, particularly in inclement weather. Nevertheless, the large apparatus in the playground and hall facilities are used to suitably develop children's physical skills. Time is not always used wisely. For example, there are occasions when children take far too long getting changed for PE or rest times are not used productively.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Monitoring by senior leaders has identified the strengths and weaknesses in provision. However, the follow up of weaknesses has not been sufficiently systematic to quickly remedy any shortcomings in provision. Good links have been established with parents and carers. Induction procedures are satisfactory and this means that children settle into school well and get off to a positive start in their education.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The proprietor has ensured that the school meets The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, schedule 1 ('the Regulations'), with the exception of those listed below.³

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of the quality of education provided (standards in part 1) and must:

- improve Reception lesson planning to ensure that child-initiated learning activities are explicit and formally recorded; suitable activities are always provided, and all class time is used wisely (paragraph 3(c)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure senior leaders build on the strengths in Reception provision and remedy quickly any weaknesses to improve outcomes
- improve the tracking of pupils' progress to determine how well different groups are achieving as they move through the school
- consider setting subject and/or individual targets for secondary aged pupils so that they know what must be improved.

³ www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/1997/contents/made

Inspection judgements

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		✓		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils		✓		
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		✓		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		✓		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	✓			
The behaviour of pupils	✓			

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils		✓		
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage			✓	

School details

School status	Independent		
Type of school	Christian day school		
Date school opened	September 1982		
Age range of pupils	4–16 years		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 85	Girls: 92	Total: 177
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Number of pupils who are looked after	Boys: 0	Girls: 0	Total: 0
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,740		
Address of school	Elmfield, Ambrose Lane, Harpenden, AL5 4DU		
Telephone number	01582 767566		
Email address	office@thekingsschool.com		
Principal	Clive Case		
Proprietor	Kingdom Education Ltd		