

The King's School

Elmfield, Ambrose Lane, Harpenden, AL5 4DU

Inspection dates	19–21 November 2013	
Overall effectiveness	Good	2
Pupils' achievement	Good	2
Pupils' behaviour and personal development	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Quality of curriculum	Good	2
Pupils' welfare, health and safety	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings

This school is good because

- The school's strong ethos permeates its whole life and work, resulting in outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural outcomes for pupils.
- Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development are outstanding and make a significant contribution to their learning.
- Pupils' achievement is good from a range of different starting points because of the impact of good teaching and curriculum.
- Parents, teachers and pupils have confidence in the good leadership of the school.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Pupils do not make consistently good progress in English in Key Stage 3.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching quality does not always focus sufficiently on what pupils learn in a lesson.
- Not all teachers make full use of the school's excellent performance data to set tasks that motivate and challenge pupils.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school requires improvement and must take action to meet schedule 1 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended by The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 ('the independent school standards'). The details are listed in the full report.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Inspectors observed 14 lessons and an assembly, and three pupils were heard to read. Discussions were held with the headteacher, other key members of the leadership team and three groups of pupils.
- The inspectors checked the school's compliance with the standards for independent schools. They viewed a wide range of documentation including policies, schemes of work, performance data, information for parents and pupils' work.
- There were 40 responses to Ofsted's Parent View, one letter from a parent, and 28 questionnaires were returned by staff.

Inspection team

Peter McKenzie, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Full report

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 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 boys and girls aged between four and 16 years and there are currently 179 on roll. The school is multi-racial; most pupils are of White British heritage or Black African heritage with a small proportion from South African, Australian and other backgrounds. None has a statement of special educational needs.
- Four 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 Early Years Foundation Stage provision was recently reviewed by the local authority.
- The school was last inspected in December 2010.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement in English for pupils in Key Stage 3.
- Improve the quality of the minority of teaching which is less than good by the use of assessment to ensure the work set takes more account of pupils' levels and builds on their interests.
- Focus more on learning outcomes in the management of teaching and learning.
- **The school must meet the following independent school standard.**
 - Ensure suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23A (1)(c)).

Inspection judgements

Pupils' achievement

Good

Achievement is good. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to 'Parent View' agree that the school inspires their children to make good progress. Pupils say, 'Teachers want you to do well.'

At the end of the Reception year, pupils achieve well in all areas of learning. The local authority judges their progress to be good when compared with pupils in similar settings. Children who have disabilities or special educational needs make particularly good progress to achieve levels typical of others of their age in communication and language. Pupils in a joint Reception and Year 1 phonics (sounds and letters) group make above average progress in early reading and writing because teachers have good subject knowledge and match work well to pupils' needs. In all other areas, progress at least meets expectations. Boys and girls make similar levels of progress throughout the school.

Pupils in the primary stage make consistently good progress, benefitting from good teaching and small classes. All pupils meet the expected two levels of progress in both English and mathematics; most make three and, exceptionally, a small number make four levels of progress. Regular monitoring of reading levels shows good progress; the youngest pupils achieve well because of their good use of phonics and teachers' focus on the development of creative writing. Pupils who read to the inspector demonstrated good achievement and confidence from their starting points on entering the school. This also confirmed the school's assessment of their levels to be accurate.

Secondary age pupils reach high standards and most exceed expectations. At the end of Year 11 there are very few achieving below expectations. In two of the last three years, all students were successful in all subjects. In the same years, the proportions of pupils gaining five grade A* to C passes including English and mathematics were consistently high. Pupils preparing for GCSE examinations are making good progress in mathematics, as are pupils in Key Stage 3. Although the older pupils are on track to achieve well in English, progress slowed for these previously, particularly at the end of Key Stage 3, because the teaching is not always as well matched to pupils' levels and needs. The leadership is addressing this. Good and sometimes better teaching in Key Stage 4 has led to significant improvement, enabling these pupils to make rapid progress to make good any lost ground. Most pupils in Key Stage 4 are now likely to exceed expectations in English and achieve well in the range of other subjects that they take.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of accurate analysis of their learning difficulties and appropriate individual education plans. They receive in-class support and, in the best lessons, work that is well matched to their abilities.

Pupils' behaviour and personal development

Outstanding

Behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Attendance is well above average and pupils arrive punctually to lessons and other activities. They are courteous, friendly and welcoming around the school. In lessons they are attentive, committed and enthusiastic learners and try their best even when teaching is not so strong. On many occasions, they take responsibility for their learning by informally working together with others and asking good questions to extend their learning. Pupils learn about British institutions and democracy. A range of visitors helps to introduce them to public services. The ethos of the school is particularly effective in helping them to appreciate the value of balanced views, tolerance and to challenge extremism.

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development as a result of the outstanding provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, confirmed by the school's audit

as being integrated throughout school life. The school practises a Christian approach, which permeates everything that it does. This means pupils thoughtfully celebrate religious and cultural diversity. As a result, the school is a very harmonious, multi-racial community. They are very clear as to the privileges and responsibilities that life within modern day Britain and indeed within the wider world.

Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. This enables them to move to other schools or colleges at the end of their time at The King's School, earning praise for their ability to harmonise socially and academically in their new environment.

There is clear recognition of right and wrong and a connection with biblical teaching very effectively underpins pupils' understanding on such issues as bullying, 'Love your neighbour as you would yourself.' Students say that bullying is extremely rare and that it would usually be resolved by the pupils themselves. The morning begins with assembly which sets the tone for the day. Pupils participate fully in an act of joy and celebration. Teaching in primary and Key Stage 3 classes provides pupils with a knowledge base for morality, rather than a directive. Pupils have a voice, beginning in the Early Years Foundation Stage and carrying on throughout the school. This successfully develops the principle of listening as well as speaking. Pupils take part in the work of local and national Christian organisations and recently made a substantial donation from their own pockets to support the victims of the Philippines disaster.

Quality of teaching

Good

Teaching is good and enables pupils to make good progress over time. Most teachers are now using well the very good information the school collects about pupils' achievement to plan their lessons. This means that most teaching and tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and challenge them well to achieve even more. The best teaching is based on a range of tasks suited to the pupils' individual abilities. For example, a Year 2 class was divided into small groups to do tasks matched to their abilities. Teachers enthuse pupils with good, and often exceptional, subject knowledge so that pupils are challenged to learn well. Primary pupils said, '[Teachers] make lessons interesting.' A minority of adequate teaching still results in some progress because of pupils' good behaviour for learning. However, in these lessons, the highest attainers are not given sufficient encouragement to extend their learning. Outstanding teaching led to high achievement in a primary food technology lesson where pupils worked in groups to make fruit salad, including practising the safe use of knives. They had also researched where these fruits grow and considered the climate of the countries involved. The best teaching challenges pupils' imagination and encourages them to take risks in extending their knowledge and inspires them to the best outcomes. Support for pupils with special educational needs is well planned and ensures good progress. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because of good teaching and the interesting things they have to do. They like having visitors and remember clearly what they learnt from them.

Assessment is particularly good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils in the upper primary and secondary classes do not know enough about their own standards and progress or how to improve to reach the next level. The quality of marking of pupils' work is variable. The best examples are thorough and help pupils to improve; they say how much they appreciate it. In a few subjects marking does not give pupils sufficient feedback or guidance.

Quality of curriculum

Good

The curriculum is good and enables pupils to achieve well. An appropriate curriculum policy is in place supported by schemes of work which are mostly detailed, although some lack connections to cross-curricular literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT). In keeping with the school's ethos, religious studies are a great strength, providing a basis for outstanding personal development. Combined with assemblies, religious studies give pupils a

mission for life, at which they excel. The school provides experience in all the required areas of learning by following the framework of the National Curriculum and the areas of learning for the Early Years Foundation Stage. This enables pupils transferring from or to other schools to have continuity of learning. Careers guidance is offered to all pupils of secondary age through one-to-one advice and parents' meetings. There is a specific curriculum in personal, social, and health education until the end of the primary phase; for secondary pupils, the school has planned effectively to deliver these topics through the curriculum. Many pupils travel significant distances to school which limits after-school extra-curricular activities. However, the school provides a range of clubs at lunchtime and often plays competitive sport against other schools during afternoon physical education lessons. There is also active participation in inter-house sporting competitions.

Pupils' welfare, health and safety

Outstanding

Pupils' welfare, health and safety are outstanding. All regulatory requirements are met. Policies are fully in place and rigorously implemented to ensure safeguarding, good behaviour and freedom from harassment and bullying. The school has posters and advice visible throughout the premises as its contribution to anti-bullying week. The single central record fully meets requirements. Staff safeguarding training is up-to-date and the designated person for child protection has completed the required higher level training. A range of risk assessment is fully in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils in school and on educational visits. Fire safety and first aid provision, including relevant training, are in place and, like all other welfare, health and safety policies and practice, documents are carefully maintained and regularly reviewed. Fire prevention equipment and portable electrical appliances are maintained and tested as required. Pupils contribute significantly to their own welfare, health and safety. They understand potential issues and apply the school's ethos; they say they know if someone in their class needs help. Older pupils make a strong contribution in their role as prefects. The very youngest children knew that they must follow guidelines to ensure their health, such as washing their hands after going to the toilet because, 'Germs can make you ill or make you smelly.' Secondary pupils follow a health and fitness module throughout Key Stage 3. Older pupils understand e-safety, with one commenting, 'I don't connect with anyone I don't know in real life.' Attendance and admission registers meet requirements.

Leadership and management

Good

Leadership and management are good. The proprietor has ensured that the school meets all but one of the independent schools standards. Action is already in place to respond to this non-compliance by remodelling a former shower and changing area to provide facilities for secondary age pupils. Leaders and managers at all levels reinforce the school's ethos and their communication of high expectations is reflected in pupils' actions. The premises provide a good, well maintained learning environment indoors and benefit from plentiful outdoor educational and leisure space. The information for parents, carers and others fully meets the regulations through an informative brochure and website. Pupils' progress is reported in detail. The complaints procedure fully meets requirements.

This leadership has resulted in a school which is at least good and improving in all respects. It has established effective systems for monitoring pupils' achievements and intervening when these appear to be slowing. Leaders and managers use a limited income from relatively low fees to maximum effect. They create a good, safe learning environment and well-resourced teaching and learning which lead to good achievement. Self-evaluation of the Early Years Foundation Stage is comprehensive and detailed. The management of teaching and learning succeeds in leading a group of adults that supports the school's ethos and works effectively to promote it. However, the monitoring of teaching quality throughout the school is not always accurate because observations have at times focused too much on the teacher and insufficiently on learning outcomes.

Parents have great confidence in the school and in what it achieves. They record positive views of the school on Parent View and in response to other surveys. Pupils are totally positive about the

school.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	A school which provides an exceptional quality of education and significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 2	Good	A school which provides a high quality of education that exceeds minimum requirements.
Grade 3	Adequate	A school which meets minimum requirements but needs to improve the quality of education it provides.
Grade 4	Inadequate	A school where minimum requirements are not met and/or the quality of education has serious weaknesses.

School details

Unique reference number	117650
Inspection number	422707
DfE registration number	919/6224

This inspection was carried out 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.

Type of school	Evangelical Christian
School status	Independent School
Age range of pupils	4–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	179
Number of part time pupils	0
Proprietor	Kingdom Education Ltd
Chair	David Crook
Headteacher	Clive Case (Principal)
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2010
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,472
Telephone number	01582 767566
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