

The King's School

Key House, Sarum Hill, Basingstoke RG21 8SR

Inspection dates

7–8 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Outcomes for children and learners

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is good throughout the school. Leaders' checks on teaching are infrequent, with limited observation and professional development for staff.
- From generally favourable starting points, the school is unable to show that all students do well enough, especially the most able.
- Teachers' feedback to students about their work lacks sufficient guidance. Secondary teachers do not always address flaws in students' writing.
- Teachers do not always set work for students at the right level, especially for the most able. Primary teachers do not always use questions well in lessons to check and deepen students' learning.
- In the primary phase, phonics (letters and sounds), spelling, handwriting and English grammar are not taught well. Students' reading books are not always suitably challenging.
- Primary teachers' expectations for the amount and quality of students' written work are too low.
- Primary students, especially the most able, do not have enough opportunities to master, explore and apply mathematics knowledge and skills.
- Teaching does not fully engage younger primary students. This leads to some poor behaviour during lessons, affecting students' progress.
- Leaders do not examine students' progress closely enough and so do not have a clear view of the progress that students make. The school's evaluation of its performance is therefore too optimistic and improvement plans lack precision.
- In the early years, good learning is not promoted consistently by the activities provided and adults' interaction with the children.
- Governors know too little about students' progress. They do not hold leaders to account systematically. A small minority of parents regret governors' early involvement in welfare queries, or feel the school takes too little notice of their views.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders, including governors, promote a positive, open vision for the Christian ethos of the school. Parents and staff overwhelmingly support this.
- Good teaching is evident, particularly in the secondary phase.
- Senior leaders are actively seeking improvement through external support.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good, helping them develop well the strengths of character which the school promotes.
- Care for students by the staff is exemplary. Students rightly feel safe, and enjoy school.
- Through a broad and balanced curriculum, fundamental British values are promoted well.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to ensure that all students, including the most able, make good progress from their different starting points, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' feedback to students about their work provides guidance on how to improve, including for secondary students' writing, and that students have opportunities to respond
 - all teachers make effective use of information about students' earlier learning to set work at the right level, particularly for the most able and in primary mathematics
 - primary teachers use questions well during lessons to check students' learning and deepen students' understanding, especially for the most able
 - primary teachers raise their expectations for the amount and quality of writing students can achieve in all subjects
 - primary students learn systematically about phonics, spelling, handwriting and English grammar, and the books they are given to develop their reading are suitably challenging
 - primary students master the range of mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding expected by the school, and have relevant opportunities to apply these by investigating and solving problems, including problems relating to real life
 - teaching in the primary phase engages all students, so that instances of poor behaviour for learning are swiftly eradicated.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - regular checks on teaching lead to relevant professional development, support and challenge for staff, and that the outcomes of these checks inform teachers' appraisal, and are reported to governors
 - coordinated systems to check and analyse students' progress (including disabled students and those with special educational needs, and the most able) are developed urgently and used to inform: the school's evaluation of its own performance and the identification of improvement priorities, plans for improvement including timescales, and governors' checks on the impact of improvement work
 - governors urgently develop systems to hold leaders to account for the performance of the school, including through the consideration of regular, formal reports about students' outcomes, behaviour and welfare
 - the roles and responsibilities of leaders and governors when parents raise any concerns about students' welfare are clarified, and implemented strictly according to policy
 - all parents express confidence in the school's response to their queries and concerns.
- Improve the early years provision by ensuring that:
 - children access a good range of purposeful teaching and activities inside and out-of-doors, which promotes effective learning in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage and phonics
 - adults' interaction with children promotes effectively children's good development, especially in communication, language, literacy and phonics.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not ensured that teaching is good throughout the school. Checks on teaching have recently been introduced in the primary phase, but remain infrequent for secondary teachers. Educational training for staff has been limited, compared with a wealth of highly valuable professional development connected with students' welfare.
- Leaders do not check students' progress through the school in a coordinated way. Leaders do not investigate well enough whether all students make good progress from different starting points. This includes disabled students, those with special educational needs, and the most able. As a result, leaders' plans for improvement lack precision about groups of students, and subjects, where improvement in progress is required. Furthermore, timescales in improvement plans lack sufficient urgency.
- Senior leaders share a clear vision for the future of education at the school. They are committed to achieve improvement, and have the confidence and support of staff. In the primary phase, support from an outstanding local infant school is newly in place for the early years staff, and an external consultant has been engaged to help develop reliable systems for checks on teaching. Partnership with another primary school is just beginning, intended to improve the teaching and assessment of writing. It is too early to gauge the impact of these initiatives.
- The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum in the primary and secondary phases. This includes a commendable range of GCSE option choices, bearing in mind the school's size. Where possible, external teaching is arranged for secondary students who wish to study a subject not taught in the school. Good use is made of local facilities, for example the use of a local sports centre for swimming and physical education.
- The curriculum is enriched by visits to places of interest, reflecting leaders' commitment to ensure all students experience the wider world. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well, preparing them securely for life in modern Britain. Students enjoy learning about the range of faiths represented in British society. The recent introduction of 'forest Friday' in the primary phase is adding richly to students' understanding of the world and their respect for the environment.
- The fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and freedom of speech are promoted forcefully in lessons, assemblies and educational visits. These principles are brought to life for students through roles and responsibilities in school, and activities such as debates and mock elections. Members of the winning party in the recent mock general election were allowed to implement one of their policies: the purchase of games and equipment for primary playtimes.
- Leaders ensure that the independent school standards are met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors feel they know the school well, through their relationship to the church or through their own family. The headteacher provides regular updates, which are recorded. The Chair of the Governing Body meets informally with the headteacher regularly.
 - Governors, nevertheless, do not have secure, formal systems to check the operation of the school and its overall effectiveness. Governors do not receive and interrogate regular reports from leaders about students' achievements, including for disabled students and those with special educational needs, and the most able. Governors do not check well enough, the school's systems for organising special educational needs provision or recording and analysing incidents and accidents.
 - Clear complaints and anti-bullying policies are available for parents, involving governors appropriately if concerns escalate. However, a very small minority of parents reflected a concern via Parent View, that governors have sometimes involved themselves at too early a stage, raising a question for parents about how confidentiality is understood by the school. Another small minority of parents told inspectors via Parent View that they felt their concerns were rebuffed by leaders and governors without due consideration.
 - Governors promote a clear, Christian vision for the school, which they develop continuously. In recent years, governors have sought to open the school to a wider range of families, promoting an aspiration of service to the community. Parents who inspectors spoke with at the school were overwhelmingly supportive, and hugely appreciative of the care provided for their children by staff.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Secure procedures are in place. Staff are well-trained and vigilant. When necessary, staff work well with parents and relevant agencies.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good throughout the school.
- In the primary phase, handwriting, spelling and English grammar are not taught well. Furthermore, students are not expected to write regularly from their own ideas, and teachers accept generally low standards of presentation and work production.
- The teaching of phonics in the early years and primary phase also requires improvement. New resources have been introduced this term, but some teachers lack the subject knowledge about teaching phonics they need to use the new materials successfully.
- Sometimes, teaching for younger primary students does not engage their interest sufficiently. At these times, students disengage from learning, and the school's behaviour policy is not always applied well enough to deal with the silly behaviour which results.
- Recognising that some most-able students underachieve in mathematics at the age of 11, the school has introduced new resources for primary students and teachers this term. These are intended to support fuller coverage of mathematics topics. However, inspectors saw that teachers do not always explain well to students the concepts underlying the exercises set from the new text books. Furthermore, opportunities for primary students to explore and investigate in mathematics, and to apply the methods they learn to solve mathematical problems, are very limited.
- Sometimes teachers overlook the needs of the most-able students. In these instances, teachers set work for the whole class or group without considering well enough what the most able already know and can do. In the primary phase, teachers make infrequent use of questions to check students' understanding as lessons progress, or to deepen most-able students' understanding of key points, especially in mathematics.
- Teachers review students' attainment through regular assessment activities, and discuss the outcomes with parents. However, the school does not have a coordinated approach to evaluating students' progress as they move through the school, or to checking that students are on track to achieve as well as they should, given their ability.
- Throughout the school, teachers' feedback to students on their work lacks guidance about how to improve. Students have insufficient opportunities to respond to any comments teachers do make. Furthermore, teachers generally accept poorly presented work without comment. In the secondary phase, teachers often overlook errors in students' written English. In the primary phase, students' mathematics is regularly marked as fully correct, without the level of challenge in following work being increased.
- Primary teachers bring topics and science lessons to life with practical and creative activities. Students enjoy opportunities such as their visit to Windsor Castle this term to explore British history and institutions.
- Secondary teachers' secure subject knowledge often supports confident and engaging teaching. This was evident, for example, in a Year 9 chemistry lesson, where students learned quickly about the key characteristics of acids and alkalis before safely conducting investigative experiments. In a GCSE history lesson, knowledgeable teaching of the historical context enabled students to reflect intelligently about why America became deeply involved in Vietnam during the 1960s.
- Secondary students are taught well the habits of a good learner. As a result, students listen attentively in lessons, and work industriously during independent study times.
- Many primary students enjoy reading at home and complete their homework diligently, well supported by parents. Primary students particularly enjoy opportunities to extend their classwork online at home. A lunchtime homework club for secondary students is valued by its regular users, who appreciate the presence of a teacher to help with any queries.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote students' personal development and welfare is good.
- The care and attention provided by all staff for students is exemplary. The premises are safe and well-maintained. First aid is prompt and sympathetic, risk assessments are well considered. Staff are well-trained in their safeguarding duties; they know the expected procedures well and are vigilant.
- Students are well-educated about the risks they face online and well-supported by frequent reminders and advice during assemblies and lessons.

- Students say they do not experience bullying, and express confidence that if this did occur, they would tell an adult and the issue would be resolved promptly. Most parents share their children's confidence about this, but a small minority do not.
- Secondary students are given valuable opportunities to consider important moral issues and questions of personal choice. They receive helpful careers guidance, and good support in making decisions about their further education, helped by the school's positive links with local sixth forms and colleges. Opportunities to lead, for example within the house system, develop students' personal skills and confidence.
- Almost without exception, the school's clear behaviour policies, guidance from staff and the work of the emotional learning support assistant, all support students to keep themselves safe and happy, and to understand the consequences of making the right and wrong choices.

Behaviour

- Students' behaviour requires improvement.
- When teaching does not capture their interest, some younger primary students ignore teachers' instructions and choose to disengage from their work as they please. This affects the progress of lessons and the learning of the class.
- Generally, students show insufficient pride in their written work, which is often untidy or undated, especially in the primary phase.
- Around the school, students behave well with consideration for one another and respect for adults. Students wear their uniform with pride and represent the school well when they are off site, for example when walking to and from the local sports centre.
- Secondary students provide reliable role models of positive behaviour from which younger students learn well. Students move between lessons promptly and then settle quickly to work.
- Students attend well. They arrive punctually, with everything needed for the day. Leaders and staff appreciate the way parents support good attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Whenever they join, almost all students enter the school with levels of learning which are at least typical for their age, and many with levels higher than this. Most students attain standards at ages 7 and 11, and at GCSE, which reflect their abilities. However, the school is unable to show this is always the case for the most able.
- A consistently higher proportion of students than nationally attain at least five GCSE qualifications at grades A* to C. Nevertheless, on closer scrutiny, students' individual results tend to cluster around grades B and C.
- At age 11, consistently higher proportions of students than nationally attain the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics. However, fewer students attain levels higher than those expected for their age in mathematics, compared with the number who attain the higher levels in reading and writing. At age 7, markedly fewer students attain levels higher than those expected for their age in writing, compared with the number who attain the higher levels in reading and mathematics.
- The school conducted a Year 1 phonics review in 2015. A disappointing proportion of students achieved the expected standard.
- Most students learn to read well during the primary phase, and parents value the regularity with which books are sent home. However, primary students are not always provided with books at the right level for their ability, undermining some students' confidence and interest in reading.
- Disabled students, and those with special educational needs, are helped to make progress. However, the school is unable to say how well the progress of these students compares with that of their peers.
- Secondary students learn effectively the subject-specific aspects and language relating to their studies.
- Students develop well the attitudes and strengths of character which the school promotes as a fundamental aim and of greater importance than qualifications. This was amply demonstrated in a whole school assembly where students had enormous fun together, enthusiastically encouraging those chosen to take part in an activity at the front. Without prompting, students calmed to listen with respect to teaching from a church leader, and then with still reverence to the reading of scripture. When the assembly finished, classes sensibly moved off to lessons while older students, without being told to do so, efficiently undertook their responsibilities to reorganise the hall.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Provision inside and outside for Nursery and Reception children lacks a sufficient range of purposeful activities to promote good learning.
- A suitable outdoor area is available. This is safe and attractive, with good cover for wet weather, shade, and an accessible water supply. However, this area is only available to Reception children during the afternoon, and then not freely, limiting their experience.
- The environment and activities, inside and out-of-doors, do not promote children's communication, language and literacy well. Letters and words are not conspicuously displayed, and although writing materials are made available, these are not given a consistently high profile or associated with stimulating activities. Suitable books are made available to the children, but not in ways which promote enthusiasm for reading.
- Adults' interaction with the children does not encourage the good development of communication and language. Adults do not consistently encourage children to speak in full sentences. Adults give clear instructions to children during activities, but do not use their interaction to explore and extend children's learning well.
- Phonics is not taught well in the early years. Children learn in groups which are too large for individuals to receive the attention they need, and have to wait their turn while limited equipment is shared. As a result, some children lose interest and their attention drifts.
- Most children join the early years with levels of learning typical for their age, and many with levels above this. Children leave Nursery and the Reception Year ready for the next stage of their education, but sometimes with a relative weakness in their communication and language skills. This affects their readiness to write well in Year 1.
- After recent training and changes to the way they plan, teachers are beginning to extend the range of activities made available to children and the way teaching responds to children's individual interests. When they plan, teachers are beginning to use helpful information gathered through a recently introduced assessment system. Advice and guidance from an outstanding early years setting is newly in place for staff. However, it is too early to judge the success of these developments.
- Parents rightly value the care and attention staff give to children's personal needs, and the good communication they receive, which epitomise the ethos of the school. Parents are pleased to support their children's learning at home, and told inspectors they enjoy a real partnership with staff.

School details

Unique reference number	116585
Inspection number	10007692
DfE registration number	850/6003
Type of school	Christian
School status	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Number of part time pupils	13
Proprietor	Basingstoke Community Churches
Chair	Sarah Roberts
Headteacher	Russ Beese
Annual fees (day pupils)	£2,880 – £5,280
Telephone number	01256 467092
Website	http://www.bccnet.org.uk/kings-school
Email address	office@tksnets.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this school

- The King's School is an independent Christian day school, founded in 1981 by the Basingstoke Community Churches.
- The school is on two linked sites, close to Basingstoke town centre.
- Admission is not academically selective and based on parents' readiness to support the explicit Christian ethos and traditions of the school. Students of all faiths and none may be admitted. A scholarship fund is administered by the trustees, to support admission in cases of financial hardship.
- The school currently has 87 students in Years 7 to 11, 65 students in Years 1 to 6, 17 children in the Reception Year, and 13 children in the Nursery.
- Students from Year 3 to Year 11 attend five days a week. Students in Years 1 and 2 attend four days a week (Monday to Thursday), with increasing numbers taking up the school's offer of attendance on Fridays for 'forest school' activities. Children in the Reception Year attend four days a week (Monday to Thursday). Nursery children attend four mornings a week (Monday to Thursday).
- No students have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan, and none are in the care of the local authority.
- There are 10 students for whom English is an additional language.
- The school implements the Early Years Foundation Stage and National Curriculum for England. Students study a range of GCSE subjects in Year 10 and 11.
- The school makes use of a range of local facilities, particularly to support physical education for secondary students. The school is developing active partnerships with other local schools and colleges, to support the professional development of staff and suitable destinations for students after Year 11.
- The school was last inspected fully by Bridge Schools Inspectorate in 2011. The report described the school as meeting 'its ambitious aims very well indeed'.

- The values and ethos of the school are summarised in the prospectus through five key statements: 'God is the centre', 'Relationships are the key', 'Everyone has a destiny', 'We are here to serve' and 'The strong must support the weak'.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching throughout the school, visiting 19 lessons. Inspectors scrutinised students' work in exercise books and on display.
- Inspectors met with students, and heard some read. Inspectors observed students at break and lunchtime and spoke with them informally around the school.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders and governors.
- Inspectors spoke with parents at the start of the school day and considered 101 responses to the online survey, Parent View. Inspectors considered two letters and two emails from different parents.
- Thirty-three responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire were analysed. Inspectors met with groups of staff and talked informally with others around the school.
- A range of documentation was considered, including: curriculum plans and schemes of work; records of students' attainment; school policies including for safeguarding, welfare, behaviour and discipline, special educational needs, reporting to parents, and dealing with parents' complaints; health and safety documentation including risk assessments and the school's records of incidents, accidents and any referrals to outside agencies; records of students' attendance; governing body records; the school's plans for improvement; and records of staff training.
- Inspectors attended a whole-school assembly, led jointly by school and church leaders.
- Inspectors toured the school, making checks in relation to the independent schools standards for the premises.

Inspection team

Siân Thornton, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Robin Hammerton

Her Majesty's Inspector

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