

Inspection of The King Alfred School

Lake Street, Lower Gornal, Dudley DY3 2AU

Inspection dates: 14 to 16 September 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Early years provision	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Does the school meet the independent school standards?	Yes
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What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love coming to school. They enjoy their learning in all subjects, especially reading and mathematics. Consequently, they behave well in their lessons and around the building, helping each other. They live up to the school's values of 'truth, goodness and beauty'. Leaders set high expectations to make sure that all pupils do as well as they can from their very different starting points.

King Alfred School offers pupils a Christian classical education based on the 'liberal arts' and 'classical science'. Pupils also study horticulture. They learn a wealth of knowledge and technical skills associated with this subject. All parents and carers responding to inspectors were highly satisfied with the school. They appreciate the progress their children make, academically and socially.

Pupils have contributed to the local community through delivering food parcels. They have also packaged up shoeboxes to send abroad as presents. Their recent trip to Dudley Castle and Zoo helped them gain a deeper understanding of their local community and the town's links with the late Queen.

There have been no reported incidents of bullying since the school opened. Pupils confirmed, 'It doesn't happen here.' However, leaders have appropriate measures in place to deal with bullying should it arise. Pupils feel very safe at school.

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

Leaders have designed a suitably ambitious curriculum, rooted in a classical education model. They also draw effectively on the breadth of national curriculum subjects and other programmes to ensure that pupils gain a good understanding of modern Britain. The curriculum is well sequenced for each year group in most subject areas.

Staff are well versed in the classical education approach. In early years, teachers are highly trained and experienced. The teaching of early reading is a strength of the school. Children in Nursery begin with pre-reading activities as soon as they start school. In Reception, adults check that the phonics programme is suited to children's previous learning and experience. Pupil groupings are suitably flexible to ensure that fluent readers are not held back and that those who require additional support receive it. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read books that are well matched to the letters and sounds they know. Pupils show a love of reading. They go to the library voluntarily to read. Over time, pupils make good progress in their reading.

In mathematics, pupils are confident users of technical vocabulary. Teachers encourage a curiosity in mathematics from an early age, promoting enquiry and learning. Through constant reinforcement and practice, learners make rapid progress.

In physical education (PE) and religious education (RE), teachers' good subject knowledge supports the aims of the curriculum well. Leaders design their plans well to enable pupils to build progressively on their knowledge. In PE, there are specific and purposeful links to pupils' learning in science about the skeleton. Children's physical development in early years is enhanced through opportunities for moving and handling.

Leaders successfully adapt the curriculum to adjust to new pupils starting across different year groups, some of whom have gaps in their knowledge and others who are already working at an advanced level. In RE, for example, where older pupils do not yet have sufficient knowledge of creation, teachers have taken them back to the start of the curriculum programme.

Leaders' intentions for pupils' learning in technology are not clearly set out. Leaders' aim is for the school to be a 'low-tech' school, so this reduces the opportunities for pupils to learn all the skills and knowledge they will need for later life.

Pupils recall their previous learning well because of the careful sequencing of lessons, and regular check-ups called 'recitations'. These sessions help teachers check what pupils have learned and remembered, and identify aspects that require further reinforcement. Consequently, arrangements for assessment are effective.

Pupils demonstrate good behaviour in and out of lessons. When new pupils join the school, their behaviour is influenced by the 'peer pressure' of those already in school. Lessons are free of any low-level disruption. Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. In the playground, older pupils look out for younger ones and anyone playing alone. Younger pupils take on responsibilities, such as those of milk or straw monitors. Children in early years show resilience in adult-led sessions and have quickly learned the expectations for behaviour and routines.

Leaders promote pupils' personal development well. Pupils have respect for others and acquire an appreciation of, and respect for, their own and other cultures. Pupils are taught and gain the knowledge they need to make informed decisions for themselves. In addition to teaching a grounding in the Christian faith, leaders enable pupils, including those children in early years, to learn about festivals such as Rosh Hashanah and Diwali. Leaders implement effectively the statutory guidance to teach relationships education and health education. Pupils learn about different types of families.

Leaders fully comply with the independent school standards and the statutory requirements of the early years foundation stage. The strengthening of the senior leadership team demonstrates its capacity to improve over time. Leaders have developed an ambitious programme in early years that is closely matched to the seven key areas of learning. However, children's ability to develop their physical and communication skills in the Reception outdoor environment is reduced by the relatively few resources available.

Leaders comply with schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010. While there are currently no identified pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in the school, all pupils are welcome. Leaders have made sure, through their accessibility plan, that there is wheelchair access to the building.

The proprietor has established an effective governing body. The independent chair holds leaders to account through regular visits, asking leaders questions on topics that provide oversight of the school's effectiveness. However, membership of the governing body comprises mostly staff members and leaders. As a result, independent and external accountability for the quality of education is less well developed.

Leaders have successfully introduced measures to ensure that staff have a good work-life balance. The working day finishes at 4pm and meetings are kept to a minimum. Staff training and development have a high priority in the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders identify any pupils who may be at risk of harm and ensure that they receive the additional help they need. Leaders with specific responsibilities are well prepared for their role. The school has a safeguarding policy published on its website. This reflects the latest government guidance. There are good links with other agencies, including the local authority. Leaders and governors are well trained to recruit new staff safely. Appropriate measures are in place to respond to any allegations or complaints that may occur in the future. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, for example by not providing personal details to any strangers they encounter.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and proprietor)

- Leaders have not thought carefully enough about the content and sequencing of the curriculum related to technology. This limits pupils' ability to develop their technological knowledge and skills. Leaders should review their curriculum provision to identify and set out the core knowledge and skills in technology they want pupils to learn to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.
- The governing body mostly comprises members of staff. This means that external accountability, especially for checking on the quality of education, is less well developed. Governors should ensure that they take steps to enhance the external accountability for leaders.
- Children in Reception do not develop their physical and communication skills in the outdoor learning environment as well as they might because the resources and equipment are limited. This also limits the number and range of activities that children can experience. Leaders should ensure that the early years environment is appropriately resourced, so teachers have the right equipment to support teaching and learning outside.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	148564
DfE registration number	332/6011
Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	10220460
Type of school	Other independent school
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	22
Number of part-time pupils	0
Proprietor	Hayley Bowen
Chair	Tim Coles
Headteacher	Hayley Bowen
Annual fees (day pupils)	£4,000
Telephone number	01902 920404
Website	www.thekingalfredschoo.co.uk
Email address	Hbowen@kingalfredschoo.co.uk

Information about this school

- The school opened to pupils for the first time in September 2021. It was registered as an independent school by the Department for Education on 14 July 2021.
- This is the school's first standard inspection.
- The school does not make use of alternative provision.
- The school provides a classical Christian education.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors carried out this inspection under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008. The purpose of the inspection is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The school meets the independent school standards. These are the requirements set out in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- This was the first routine inspection the school had received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders, and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with the proprietor (who is also the headteacher), as well as senior leaders and other members of staff.
- Inspectors met groups of pupils.
- Inspectors met three members of the governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors took account of a small number of responses to the Ofsted Parent View free-text service and to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They also spoke to parents at the start and end of the school day. Inspectors also considered the very small number of responses to the Ofsted staff questionnaire. There were no pupil questionnaires to consider.
- Inspectors considered information on pupils' behaviour, attendance, personal development, safeguarding and child protection.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, PE and RE. They also looked at or discussed work in technology and science. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at the curriculum structure, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work where these were available.
- Inspectors spoke to leaders, governors, staff and pupils about safeguarding. They checked the school's single central record, as well as all relevant documents, policies and certificates. They checked that the building, surrounding area and equipment were safe, including any locked rooms.

- Inspectors conducted all relevant activities to check compliance with the independent school standards.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Susan Hickerton

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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