

Inspection of a good school: King James's School

King James Road, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire HG5 8EB

Inspection dates:

10 and 11 January 2023

Outcome

King James's School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

King James's School is a caring environment where pupils learn well. Pupils feel safe and supported. There is a strong focus on ensuring that everyone feels welcome. Most behaviour in lessons is very positive. The vast majority of pupils are keen and engage confidently in their learning. The school's values, 'ready, respectful, engaged', are regularly reinforced. Bullying is rare. Pupils report incidents of bullying. Teachers resolve issues quickly and effectively.

The long history of this school, dating back to 1616, is proudly celebrated. Pupils feel connected to Knaresborough's heritage, particularly through their history lessons. A rich range of extra-curricular visits allows pupils to explore that heritage, and the wider world. Pupils learn to respect other cultures and faiths. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.

Curriculum planning is ambitious and meets pupils' learning needs. Teachers have expert subject knowledge. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are extremely well supported. Students in the sixth form flourish. There is a broad range of subjects available. Pastoral support for sixth-form students is also highly effective.

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

Staff have excellent subject knowledge. Planning ensures that core knowledge is revisited over time. This helps pupils remember their learning. Teachers model tasks carefully for pupils. Pupils know what to do. Staff pick up on and address any misconceptions that arise. Pupils are articulate and confident in their learning. Curriculum planning in the sixth form builds effectively on what pupils have learned in key stage 3 and during their GCSE studies. Leaders are ambitious for pupils with SEND. Staff support and challenge all pupils to meet the demands of the curriculum. Assessments enable teachers to identify gaps in pupils' knowledge and address them.

Pupils' behaviour in school is good. There are some incidents of low-level disruption. Teachers manage these well.

Leaders have prioritised reading. They provide a range of interventions to help those in the earlier stages of reading to improve. Leaders, quite correctly, have identified that the programme for early readers needs streamlining so that targeted support is more effective.

The curriculum for personal, social and health education is well planned. Pupils develop a strong sense of fairness, and they respect other people, regardless of their individual differences. Pupils learn how to stay safe, including online. They understand how to recognise unhealthy relationships and learn coping strategies. They are ready for life in modern Britain. There are a range of extra-curricular opportunities available, including clubs and educational visits. Pupils have opportunities to take on responsibilities. For example, there is an active school council. Students in Year 13 mentor younger pupils to help them stay on track.

Students in the sixth form are well supported by a strong pastoral team. Personal, social and health education lessons continue in the sixth form. Students learn about healthy relationships and staying safe. They are prepared well for adulthood. Staff work with students to explore potential future careers and, according to students' interests, apply for university courses or jobs.

The careers programme in key stages 3 and 4 is developing. There is a range of opportunities for pupils to explore their next steps, such as visits to local colleges. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to engage meaningfully with the world of work. Leaders have plans to improve the careers programme and raise pupils' aspirations even higher.

Leaders at King James's offer a broad range of curriculum subjects. The breadth of the offer means the number of pupils following the English Baccalaureate (EBacc) sometimes falls below national expectations. The EBacc is a group of subjects that has been shown to provide a strong basis for pupils' later study. Leaders continue to promote EBacc subjects to all pupils.

Governors are deeply committed to the school. They regularly visit the school to speak directly to staff and pupils, as well as having regular meetings with the headteacher. They offer appropriate challenge and support to help leaders continue to develop the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils feel safe in school. They know how to seek help from trusted adults if they need support. If staff are worried about a pupil, they report it quickly. Leaders act on concerns. They know pupils and their families well. This helps leaders to support pupils quickly and effectively. Leaders keep detailed logs of concerns and the actions they take. Their work with external agencies, such as local authority children's services and the police, is highly

effective. They work together proactively to keep pupils safe from harmful experiences, such as criminal exploitation.

Staff and visitors are appropriately vetted to make sure they are safe to work with children and young people.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils who struggle with reading do not receive effective interventions routinely. They are not learning to read quickly enough. Leaders should streamline the current offer by consolidating pupils' phonic knowledge and improving pupils' fluency through frequent reading practice.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to engage meaningfully with the world of work. They do not experience and celebrate aspects of working life that would prepare them for adulthood well. Leaders should develop the careers offer, prepare pupils for the world of work and raise their aspirations further.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in December 2011.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use 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.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	121687
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10211618
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,575
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Malcolm Dawson
Headteacher	Carl Sugden
Website	http://www.king-james.co.uk/
Date of previous inspection	25 April 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school makes use of two alternative providers. One of these is registered. The other is in the process of registering.
- The school has a sixth form.
- The school is federated with Boroughbridge High School.
- Leaders' approach to careers education ensures that the requirements of the Baker clause are met.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school 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.

- The lead inspector held several meetings with the headteacher during the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with several members of the governing body.
- Deep dives were carried out in these subjects: history, mathematics, design technology and drama. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and, where appropriate, looked at samples of pupils' work.
- An inspector observed pupils reading to a familiar adult.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils formally and informally about their learning and experiences at school.
- Safeguarding documentation and records for behaviour and attendance were checked.
- Inspectors reviewed responses received through the Ofsted online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. Inspectors also considered responses received through Ofsted's staff and pupil questionnaires.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour throughout the school day, including during lesson visits and at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Inspectors spoke to groups of pupils about their views on behaviour and the wider experiences they have at school.

Inspection team

Zoe Helman, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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His Majesty's Inspector

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Ofsted Inspector

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