

Inspection of an outstanding school: The Kingston Academy

Richmond Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 5PE

Inspection dates: 17 and 18 April 2024

Outcome

The Kingston Academy continues to be an outstanding school.

The headteacher of this school is Sophie Cavanagh. This school is part of Kingston Educational Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Sophie Cavanagh, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Graham Willett.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is an exceptional school where the values of 'community, character, ambition' are fully realised. Inclusion is at the heart of the school's work, and those who work here go 'above and beyond' to ensure that pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, become high achievers and well-rounded individuals.

Leaders have very high expectations of pupils. They provide an ambitious curriculum that meets the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils perform extremely well across subject areas, including in the sixth form.

The school has a relentless drive to ensure that pupils' character is fully developed. The school's provision for personal development is exceptional. Leaders have carefully constructed the 'going beyond' programme, enabling all pupils to experience a wide range of activities. The vast range of extracurricular clubs, trips and tours overseas enrich the curriculum. The provision for sports is of particularly high calibre.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are highly focused on their learning in lessons and take responsibility for the learning of others as well as their own. Pupils are very happy, feel safe and attend very well. Bullying is very rare, and when it happens it is dealt with swiftly.

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

The school has carefully considered and implemented a very ambitious curriculum. Leaders have ensured that the curriculum is thoughtfully sequenced in a way that

promotes high levels of engagement. For example, in English throughout Years 7 to 9, the texts chosen are complex, yet presented in a way that is adapted suitably for pupils' abilities. The use of language is increasingly sophisticated as pupils move through the school. The 'Vinyl Frontier' activities in music enable pupils to study different artists, styles and genres, rapidly increasing their ability to comprehend and apply musical vocabulary and terminology. In Spanish, pupils articulate and grasp complex concepts fluently. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study a broad range of subjects and have access to both academic and vocational options in, for example, physical education and music. Pupils achieve very well across all subjects.

Teachers have high expectations and very strong subject knowledge. They have a detailed understanding of pupils' prior knowledge. They question pupils skilfully, ensuring that the chosen learning activities are well-sequenced. This challenges pupils to think, do, and understand more. For example, in Year 13 media studies, students carefully consider how the media genre is communicated through the meaning of film posters. Students are able to articulate the key points and make connections to previous learning in the subject.

The school personalises the curriculum appropriately and especially for pupils with SEND. Pupils in the specially resourced unit are fully integrated into the school. Pupils with SEND receive high-quality support, balancing a focus on meeting needs along with developing independence. These pupils achieve very well.

The school has prioritised reading, accurately identifying those who have fallen behind. Leaders successfully implemented a range of initiatives, including the teaching of phonics and parent volunteers reading with younger pupils. These pupils rapidly gain the skills needed to become more confident in their reading.

Pupils' behaviour is exemplary because they value their education and want to work hard. They attend school very well. Pupils are courteous, respectful and kind to each other. The school's mantra of 'ready, respectful, safe' is lived out by the pupils, who take pride in their learning and are eager to take on leadership within the school and the local community. For example, Year 13 students support Year 12 students in mathematics and also younger pupils in helping them to read.

The school develops pupils beyond their academic studies. There is a keen focus on pupils' personal development. The school places a high priority on pupils' sense of belonging. Pupils thrive on the wider opportunities the school provides through a carefully thought through curriculum. The school's bespoke 'going beyond' curriculum is exceptional. It fosters the school's values and teaches pupils how to be safe, independent, confident and active citizens. For example, pupils are taught water safety knowledge and skills. They gain experience in the local river and apply water survival techniques to be safe.

The range of trips and clubs offered to all pupils, including pupils with SEND, is extensive. Notably, the provision for sports is vast and many pupils engage in sporting events with considerable success. The school has led sports initiatives, including getting more girls into sports leadership and achieving success at the national level.

The school benefits from its partnership with local higher education and further education settings. For example, pupils have access to engineering suites and reference libraries.

The school engages with and actively listens to the staff to ensure that workload is reduced and manageable. The school is systematic and meticulous in its oversight of all areas of its work. Members of the trust and governing body fully participate in a rigorous approach to ensure the school's vision is fully realised.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. 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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in May 2018.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	141862
Local authority	Kingston upon Thames
Inspection number	10323407
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy free school
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	1,172
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	195
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Graham Willett
Headteacher	Sophie Cavanagh
Website	www.thekingstonacademy.org
Dates of previous inspection	15 and 16 May 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, the number of pupils on roll has significantly increased and the school now operates fully into the sixth form.
- The school has a specially resourced provision for up to 15 pupils who have autism.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school uses two registered alternative provisions.

Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, modern foreign languages and music. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also sampled the curriculum in several other subject areas.
- The inspectors took account of responses to Ofsted's online survey, Ofsted Parent View. Inspectors also considered the responses of pupils and staff to Ofsted's online surveys.
- Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils during lessons and social times.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils, and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.
- The lead inspector met with some members of the local governing body and trustees.

Inspection team

Ray Lau, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
David Boyle	Ofsted Inspector
Alan McDougall	Ofsted Inspector

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