Inspection of The King's School

Cadhay Lane, Ottery St Mary, Devon EX11 1RA

Inspection dates:	14 and 15 January 2025
The quality of education	**Good**
Behaviour and attitudes	**Outstanding**
Personal development	**Outstanding**
Leadership and management	**Good**
Sixth-form provision	**Outstanding**
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

The headteacher of this school is Rob Gammon. The school is a single academy trust. The trust is overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Steve Ellison.

Until November 2020, the school was exempt from routine inspection because it was judged as outstanding for overall effectiveness at its previous inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The school has not been inspected under section 5 of the Act since 27 and 28 March 2014.

What is it like to attend this school?

Overwhelmingly, pupils, including sixth-form students, enjoy learning at The King's School. The school has very high aspirations for pupils to develop socially, emotionally and academically. The very well-designed curriculum enables most pupils to excel in a broad range of subjects. As a result, most pupils achieve significantly above the national figure in many subjects. However, a small group of pupils, including some disadvantaged pupils, who struggle with literacy, do not achieve as well as they could.

Through the curriculum, pupils' characters are shaped exceptionally well. They have an impressive range of opportunities to develop leadership skills such as working as librarians and as prefects. Sixth-form students participate in a very rich programme that develops their knowledge of the world around them. For example, Year 12 students support younger pupils with their reading. Pupils are very knowledgeable about citizenship and the importance of individual liberty and democracy. Pupils routinely vote for representatives in the school parliament.

Pupils' behaviour both in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are very well motivated to learn and achieve. Through the curriculum, pupils learn to be kind, respectful and empathetic. They form very strong relationships with staff and each other.

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

The school has worked hard to construct a well sequenced curriculum that enables pupils to build on their prior knowledge well. Staff check what pupils know and do not know to ensure that any misconceptions are addressed. Consequently, most pupils are supported to deepen their knowledge about a range of subjects. For example, pupils' knowledge of French grammar, vocabulary and phonics is skilfully developed to enable them to gain increasing fluency. Teachers' subject knowledge is very strong. As experts in their subjects, teachers support most pupils to learn the curriculum well. For example, in mathematics, most pupils develop their reasoning and problem-solving skills extremely well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective, bespoke support in some areas of the curriculum. However, where pupils struggle with literacy, the school has not ensured that this barrier to learning is effectively addressed across the curriculum. Consequently, pupils who struggle with literacy do not achieve well.

The sixth-form curriculum is exceptionally well-structured, enabling students to learn very well. Sixth-form students are extremely positive about the quality of education and the strong pastoral support they receive. Through the curriculum, students extend their knowledge about their subjects very well. They are very well supported to make informed decisions about their next steps.

The English curriculum prioritises reading a breadth of texts as well as enabling pupils to see drama texts brought to life in the theatre. Additionally, sixth-form students are immersed in reading a range of texts. The library is a very inviting space with a breadth of well selected books as well as digital texts. Pupils in key stage 3 are supported to read

routinely for pleasure. The school's whole-school approach to reading is clear but not consistently put in place at key stage 4.

The school prioritises pupils, including sixth-form students' personal development. The curriculum is enriched through a comprehensive programme of trips and visitors. Pupils learn about their local and national heritage by completing the Ten Tors Challenge and visits to cultural icons in London. Pupils and sixth-form students are overwhelmingly positive about the opportunities offered by the school. A very well considered programme of clubs enables pupils to develop skills in an impressive range of areas such as chess, German and football. Pupils value highly the opportunities to organise events such as the school's 'House Dance' competition. The personal, social and health education programme at all key stages is very well planned. Consequently, pupils and sixth-form students are very well prepared for life beyond school. The careers programme is exceptionally well-structured enabling pupils to make informed decisions about option subjects, apprenticeships and higher education.

The pastoral support for pupils is very strong. Routinely, staff go 'above and beyond' to support pupils and their families. Through the development of strong relationships, they ensure that pupils attend school and engage with learning. Consequently, overall attendance at school is consistently strong.

Governance is strong. The board of trustees holds the school to account and provides challenge and support in equal measure. Staff are extremely positive about the support for their workload and well-being. They are very proud to work at the school. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school's provision. One parent's view echoed that of many, 'The school is fantastic.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, who struggle with literacy do not receive effective support to enable them to learn well in all areas of the curriculum. Assessment information is not used with precision to address gaps in pupils' literacy knowledge. The school must ensure that assessment information about pupils' literacy knowledge informs effective support so that pupils develop the literacy skills to achieve well across the curriculum.
- The school's plan to encourage pupils to develop good reading habits is not yet consistently in place in all year groups. Therefore, some pupils do not routinely engage in reading for enjoyment. The school should ensure that their plan to promote reading for enjoyment is implemented in all year groups.

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	136673
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10344604
Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1,106
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	206
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Steve Ellison
Headteacher	Rob Gammon
Website	www.thekings.devon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	27 and 28 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school uses two registered alternative provisions and two unregistered alternative provisions.
- The school is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 information and engagement about approved technical educational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and

management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- 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. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher and members of the leadership team.
- An inspector held discussions with a local authority education officer and members of the board of trustees, including the chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, mathematics, geography, modern foreign languages and design technology. In each subject, inspectors met with senior and curriculum leaders, talked to pupils, visited lessons, spoke to teachers and looked at examples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with staff to consider their views.
- 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 considered the views of parents and carers who responded to the confidential questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View. They evaluated the views of staff and pupils from the Ofsted online questionnaires.

Inspection team

Susan Aykin, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Richard Barnes	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Forster	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
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