

The King's School

Independent School

Inspection report

DCSF Registration Number	919/6224
Unique Reference Number	117650
Inspection number	317884
Inspection dates	27 – 28 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 162A of the Education Act 2002 (as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005).

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005, in order to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

Information about the school

The King's School is an independent evangelical Christian day school on the outskirts of Harpenden. It is affiliated to the Christian Schools' Trust and provides full-time education for boys and girls aged 4 to 16 years. The school is owned by Kingdom Education Ltd. It is housed in a former sanatorium which is leased from NCH Action for Children. The school's mission statement is, '*Young people devoted to Christ, equipped for life and prepared to reach the world*'.

The school is registered for 225 pupils and there are currently 210 pupils on roll. The school was first registered in September 1982. This is the school's first published inspection report by Ofsted.

Evaluation of the school

The King's School is a happy and harmonious school which provides a good quality of education and a satisfactory level of care for its pupils. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and the strong Christian ethos pervades all aspects of the life of the school. The school meets most, but not all, of the requirements for registration.

Quality of education

The curriculum is good. It meets the needs of pupils of all ages well. Despite the lack of a dedicated outdoor learning environment, the accommodation for the Foundation Stage is used effectively to provide very good learning opportunities in all areas of the curriculum. As a result, children get a very good start to their education. In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils have access to all the subjects of the National Curriculum. The provision for religious education is particularly strong, supporting the school's mission statement very well. Teachers are good at emphasising the links between different subjects, making pupils' learning relevant and meaningful. This good provision is continued throughout Key Stage 3. The oldest pupils have access to a good range of subjects at GCSE level and this prepares them well for adult life and for the next stages of their education. Provision for the creative arts is a particular strength for all age groups. Pupils benefit greatly from a good range of additional activities, including sports clubs. They also learn much from educational visits, such as those to museums for a Victorian day and as part of their work on the Romans. Whilst there is no discrete taught programme for pupils' personal, social and health education, issues are covered effectively through the school's pastoral care provision and through inclusion in relevant subjects, such as science and religious studies.

Teaching and assessment are good enabling pupils in all year groups to make good progress and achieve high standards by the time they leave the school. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons which provide a good level of challenge for the pupils. Lessons are well-paced and incorporate a good range of teaching strategies. As a result, pupils have positive attitudes, work hard and make good progress. Teachers know the pupils well and use their good questioning skills effectively to monitor learning and ensure that it is effective. In a small minority of lessons teaching is less effective. This is because these lessons are not well planned and it is not clear what the pupils are intended to learn. As a result, the progress they make is limited.

Teachers' specialist expertise is well used enabling pupils to make outstanding progress in some areas. For example, phonics work to develop early reading skills provides excellent foundations for future learning. Many of the older pupils make particularly good progress in the creative subjects, including dance and art.

Although pupils' work is marked, this is frequently superficial. It does not provide sufficient guidance to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve their work. Nevertheless, good quality dialogue with teachers ensures that most pupils do have a sound understanding of how to improve. Pupils in Year 1 benefit from individual targets to help them develop their learning. However, no evidence of this effective practice was seen elsewhere in the school.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Their spiritual, moral and social development is particularly strong. Although individual pupils have a very good understanding of their own culture and relationships between different cultural backgrounds is very good, their understanding about the wider range of cultural traditions is only satisfactory. The school is a very happy community, pupils' attendance is good and they clearly enjoy their education. It is very successful at raising pupils' self esteem and helping them to become confident learners. New pupils settle in very well and quickly make friends. Older pupils are very good at caring for the younger ones. Teachers provide excellent role models for pupils and all staff have high expectations of how pupils will behave, consequently behaviour is outstanding. All pupils benefit greatly from the school's strong Christian ethos which contributes to their excellent spiritual and moral development. This is prominent in all aspects of the school's work. Drama and music provide a significant contribution to developing pupils' spiritual understanding, for example, through the recent very successful production of 'Fiddler on the Roof'. The school council provides good opportunities to listen to and respond to the views of younger pupils. For example, at their request, outdoor play equipment has been provided, contributing to the enjoyment of younger pupils at break time. However, the majority of older pupils rightly feel they have insufficient involvement in making decisions about the school. There are very good opportunities for younger pupils to contribute

to the life of the school by taking on responsibilities such as being playground buddies. The involvement of the school council in appointing these buddies is a strong feature. Older pupils contribute through taking leading roles in assemblies or acting as prefects.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

The welfare, health and safety of pupils are satisfactory because, although the school takes good care of its pupils, some policies and procedures need updating. All the required policies are in place, but not all are sufficiently detailed or fully implemented. The behaviour policy has been implemented effectively leading to the outstanding behaviour seen around the school. Pupils feel safe and they say that there is no bullying in school and any disagreements between pupils are dealt with fairly. However, the bullying policy is insufficiently detailed. Although they have a good understanding about how to lead a healthy lifestyle, a minority of the older pupils choose to eat a variety of unhealthy snacks at break times.

The school has a suitable policy for child protection, although this is not fully implemented. Staff have been trained in basic child protection procedures, but the designated senior member of staff has not updated her training at the required level sufficiently recently. The school has a suitable first aid policy and staff are appropriately trained. The policy for educational visits does not provide sufficient guidance in some areas such as supervision ratios and emergency procedures. Risk assessments for the premises as well as activities on and away from the school site are appropriately detailed. However, there is not a robust system in place to ensure that they are reviewed regularly. There are a few health and safety hazards which have not been addressed, such as the absence of protective covers on fluorescent lights and first aid kits which are not fully stocked.

The school has planned well to increase accessibility and will be drawing up a further plan to review the possibility of further improving access.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

The school fully complies with the regulations relating to the checks it makes on prospective employees regarding their identity and suitability to work with children. However, appropriate checks are not made to ascertain candidates' medical fitness.

School's premises and accommodation

The school buildings have been suitably adapted to meet the needs of the school. The classrooms and specialist areas are appropriately sized. The buildings are clean and tidy and generally well maintained. Although the building is in generally sound decorative order, there are some areas of peeling paint, for example, on the corridor area by the gym.

There is adequate outdoor space for break times and physical education (PE). This is well laid out and also provides good quality large fixed play equipment for the younger pupils. Good use is also made of facilities off site, such as high quality athletics facilities, for additional PE activities.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The school has a good relationship with parents and their attendance at parental consultations is very good. These are most effective for pupils up to Year 6, when they are held termly. The shared writing of individual targets for pupils in Year 1 is a particularly good feature. The annual written reports provide suitable information for parents. The prospectus has recently been updated and fulfils all of the requirements.

Procedures for handling complaints

The school has a clearly written and fair complaints procedure which meets the requirements.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005, with the exception of those listed below.

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety (standard 3) and must:

- improve the written policy to prevent bullying to ensure that it has regard to the DCSF guidance *Bullying: don't suffer in silence* (paragraph 3(2)(a))
- ensure that the appointed senior member of staff for child protection is appropriately trained in order to comply with DCSF guidance *Safeguarding children and safer recruitment in education* (2007) (paragraph 3(2)(b))
- improve the written policy relating to the health and safety of pupils on activities outside the school to ensure it has regard to DCSF guidance *Health and safety of pupils on educational visits* (paragraph 3(2)(c)).

The school does not meet all requirements in respect of suitability of proprietor and staff (standard 4) and must:

- prior to the confirmation of the appointment of all staff (including volunteers), ensure appropriate checks been carried out to confirm their medical fitness and take this information into account in determining whether their appointment will be confirmed (paragraph 4(2)(a)).

What the school could do to improve further

While not required by the regulations, the school might wish to consider the following points for development:

- ensure that all lessons are planned with clear learning outcomes for the pupils
- improve the quality of marking to provide pupils with more helpful guidance about how to improve their work
- enable pupils to gain a greater understanding of the culturally diverse society in which they live
- provide better opportunities for the senior pupils to influence the life of the school.

School details

Name of school	The King's School		
DCSF number	919/6224		
Unique reference number	117650		
Type of school	Christian day school		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	September 1982		
Age range of pupils	4-16		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 106	Girls: 104	Total: 210
Annual fees (day pupils)	£ 3972		
Address of school	Elmfield Ambrose Lane Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 4DU		
Telephone number	01582767566		
Fax number	01582765406		
Email address	office@thekingsschool.com		
Headteacher	Mr Clive Case		
Proprietor	Kingdom Education Ltd		
Reporting inspector	Mark Mumby HMI		
Dates of inspection	27-28 November 2007		