

Kings' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116468
Local Authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	326405
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Sheila Nolan

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Boarding provision	
Social care URN	
Social care inspector	Bridgette Lowe

The inspection of social care was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1650
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Major General P Bray
Headteacher	Mrs S Lawrence
Date of previous school inspection	9 November 2005
School address	Romsey Road Winchester SO22 5PN
Telephone number	01962 861161
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Age group	11–16
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Kings' School, a specialist business, enterprise and language college, is popular with families across the county and is heavily oversubscribed. The school population reflects the local area and is overwhelmingly of White British heritage. The school hosts a unit for 20 students with physical disabilities and provides boarding for 28 boys. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average, as is the proportion of students with significant barriers to learning. These are mainly students with specific learning difficulties and some with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The school is accredited with the enhanced Healthy Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Kings' School is an exceptional business and enterprise college which provides its students with an outstanding quality of education. The majority of parents strongly support the school's drive for excellence. 'Students rise to the expectations of high standards,' wrote a parent, echoing the positive views of many.

Since the last inspection, the school has made great strides in striving to engage with parents and with the local community. Its good sporting facilities now provide access within and outside the school day to families and local residents. The Tower is being developed as an arts centre and the business, enterprise and language specialisms offer an increasingly wide range of evening and other courses for both adults and local primary schools. Partnerships with external agencies and the parents' association are excellent and contribute well to the support of vulnerable students and the school in general. Despite these efforts, however, a small proportion of parents who returned the inspection questionnaires perceive that communications with the school are still not as good as they would like and that their views are not regularly taken into account. The school acknowledges that this is, indeed, an area where some improvement is needed and steps are already under way to address these concerns, particularly with regard to reporting students' progress. The determined and excellent leadership of the headteacher, very strongly supported by able senior and middle managers, is guiding the school exceptionally well in a thorough review of its procedures for regular checks on students' performance. New reporting systems are ready to be implemented in the new academic year.

Central to the school's success is its adherence to its vision of 'Una Laborantes - Working Together'. Parents, governors and teachers are ambitious for students' personal and academic success. Students of all ages also show a very high motivation to achieve as well as possible, and cooperate exceptionally well with their teachers both in the classroom and around the school. They have ample opportunities to voice their views and make suggestions for school improvements, and are regularly involved in decision making. Teaching is outstanding and standards are consistently high by the end of Year 11. Students achieve exceptionally well, with around three quarters regularly gaining five or more higher GCSE grades, including English and mathematics. Not only do students succeed in their academic work, but they also gain unparalleled experience of business and commerce through the school's specialisms. These opportunities are interwoven throughout the excellent curriculum and within the very wide-ranging out-of-hours activities. Many students contribute much to the wider community through sports activities for younger pupils, through charity work at home and overseas and through enterprise activities.

Kings' supports and guides its students particularly well, ensures they are safe and prepares them very effectively for the next stage of education or training. Vulnerable students are especially well nurtured and integrated into the school community. Students understand extremely well before they join the school how they should behave towards students from the physically disabled unit. They care for them well. Careful checks on students' progress underpin the strong pastoral care and very good relationships throughout the school and in the small boarding house. Generally, students attend regularly, although there are a few families who do not yet assent to the importance of not arranging holidays in term time. Undoubtedly, the vast majority of students enjoy their time at Kings' and make real efforts to put into practice their genuine understanding of healthy living.

Kings' has clearly demonstrated its strong capacity to continue to improve, not least because of its strong emphasis on the professional development of staff and its determination to offer each student the best opportunities to succeed, but also because it is willing to listen and to recognise where improvements are needed.

Effectiveness of boarding provision

Grade: 1

The quality of boarding at Kings' School is outstanding. The vast majority of National Minimum Standards are met, with many exceeded. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. All aspects of the boarding provision and care are maintained to an exceptionally high standard. The school's effective management structure ensures excellent communication and consistent working practices between the boarding and teaching staff contribute to promoting boarders' welfare and keeping them safe. Strong leadership within the boarding provision is underpinned by clear policies and procedures which inform excellent staff practice. Boarders are overwhelmingly positive about their boarding experience, making comments such as 'Boarding and the staff are great,' 'I feel proud to be a boarder at Kings' School.'

The school has appropriately addressed one of the two recommendations made in the previous report, to undertake a full review of the boarding provision, and, as a result, a formalised boarding-development plan is in place. The second recommendation, regarding improved indoor space for recreational activities, has not been fully addressed. This was reviewed, but consultation with boarders found that their preference was that the funding be used to provide new equipment for the information technology suite within the boarding house.

The boarding staff and the school's excellent pastoral care contribute to identifying and addressing each boarder's personal support needs and to promoting their health and well-being. Effective links established between boarding and teaching staff, the school welfare assistant and the dedicated specialist guidance teachers help to ensure that boarders' physical and emotional needs are fully addressed. The school seeks appropriate parental consent for emergency medical treatment and first aid. Improvements have been made to medication-administration records to ensure that confidentiality is maintained in relation to boarders' information. All staff are trained in first aid; however, there is not a designated qualified first-aider among the boarding house staff.

Boarders' health is further enhanced by the school's commitment to healthy eating and the provision of nutritious and varied meals. Mealtimes are well-managed social occasions. The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) curriculum covers the subject of healthy lifestyles, which is fully supported in practice by staff.

Boarders feel safe living in the boarding provision; staff demonstrate a sound understanding of safeguarding issues. The school's designated specialist guidance teachers are an excellent resource. They are responsible for safeguarding and work with local networks to promote pupil welfare. Health and safety is given high regard across the school and on the boarding site. Risk assessments are completed for identified hazards and activities and to safeguard individual boarders. Boarders are appropriately protected from fire safety hazards. The school has robust recruitment and selection procedures to vet all staff working with boarders to ensure their suitability.

Boarders report that bullying is not a problem. Staff take appropriate action to limit the risk of bullying and promptly deal with any issue that arises. The school's ethos successfully supports a homely boarding environment, wherein boarders are encouraged to respect and value diversity

and to live harmoniously together in an integrated and supportive school community. Relationships between boarders and staff are very positive; boarders are happy and enjoy living at the school. Boarders spoke of boarding as a 'home from home' experience with an 'excellent family atmosphere, where everyone gets on well together'. The school's behaviour strategy provides pupils with a clear understanding of expected standards of behaviour, consequences, sanctions and rewards.

Boarders are empowered by and confident in managing their own boarding-house forum and they report changes being implemented as a result of these meetings. There is an open culture within the house, and daily conversations with staff ensure that boarders' views are heard and their opinions taken into account. Boarders can contact their family and friends in private; there have been improvements to the information technology suite, which enable better communication. New boarders are given excellent support to settle into boarding life.

The overall standard of boarding accommodation is good. Boarders have sufficient privacy in boarding; the accommodation is secure from public intrusion. Improvements have been made to the environment and shower facilities, although, owing to the lack of ventilation in the shower facilities, damp has caused damage and mildew on the ceilings.

Staffing levels in boarding are sufficient to meet the needs of boarders. New staff complete an induction programme, which includes child-protection training. Consistency across education and boarding is maintained through teaching staff undertaking boarding duties. The committed, motivating, mixed-gender staff team delivers an excellent standard of care and supervision to boarders. Regular monitoring of boarding-care practices contributes to ensuring that boarders' welfare is promoted and safeguarded.

What the school should do to improve further

- Take forward rapidly plans to improve communications with parents on reporting students' progress and make further efforts to increase their understanding of the importance of regular attendance.
- The school must ensure that it meets the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools currently not met, as detailed below:

National Minimum Standards (NMS) to be met to improve social care

- ensure at least one member of boarding staff has a suitable first aid qualification (NMS 15.7)
- ensure the shower facilities are adequately ventilated and work undertaken to maintain the environment to a good standard (NMS 44.6).

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Standards are consistently high at Kings' and students achieve exceptionally well by the end of Year 11. The school has sustained the already excellent results noted at the last inspection.

Students sustain the broadly above-average standards with which they join the school and make good progress. Year 9 national test results are regularly above average in English, mathematics and science. Their progress accelerates as they move through the school. In 2008, as in previous years, around three quarters of the students gained five or more A* to C grades in GCSE examinations that included English and mathematics. Able students achieved especially well with over a third of Year 11 examination results at the highest available A* and A grades. In some subject areas, such as religious education, these students also achieve well in advanced

supplementary courses. All other groups of students also make at least good progress, although a small number of students with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties make slower progress than their peers. Students with physical disabilities achieve as well as others because they are very effectively integrated into the daily life of the school.

Students throughout the school are particularly successful in business and communications studies, reflecting the school's specialist status. They also achieve well in the school's second new languages. Nevertheless, the school rightly acknowledges that, despite students' overall exceptional success, there is still some variation between subject areas as to how rapidly students progress, and this is now being addressed effectively through curriculum changes. Current progress checks indicate that 80% of Year 11 students are likely to gain a higher GCSE grade in both English and mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Students are confident, articulate young people who enjoy school, work very well together and feel safe and secure in the well-kept school environment. 'I am proud to be a pupil at Kings', reported a student and this reflected the views of the majority. Both in and out of class, they make impressive contributions to the wider community, taking part in organising charity events and peer support for younger learners, for example. Students have a very good understanding of a range of cultures through work in religious education, in assemblies, and in many subject areas. Their spiritual, moral and social development is excellent.

Students take maximum advantage of opportunities to live healthily. There is a very high participation rate in sports activities and they appreciate healthy lunch menus. Through joining the many enterprise activities and through their excellent academic progress, students prepare exceptionally well for their future economic well-being. Most go on to further education or training.

Attendance is good, although some students lose school time through family holidays. The behaviour of the vast majority of students is impeccable but some disregard the school's attempts to keep it litter-free during the lunch hour.

Students are committed to contributing to the school's organisation through the school council and through targeted surveys. For example, their views on the school uniform and on plans for the safety and encouragement of cycling informed the school's actions very effectively.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The school has used its monitoring and evaluation of lessons to match professional-development activities very well to individual teachers' needs. The quality of learning and teaching seen during the inspection was similar to that of the school's own judgements on lessons.

Teachers' excellent subject knowledge, high expectations, brisk pace and regular checking of progress are common strengths across the school. In an outstanding Year 10 geography lesson on tourism in Thailand, the business-orientated approach and excellent use of information and communication technology resources inspired students to enthusiastic levels of participation. Students enjoyed working in groups and showed great maturity in taking an active part in

discussions. A Year 7 mathematics lesson on probability was very successful because the work built sensitively on previous learning. Relationships between staff and students are based on mutual respect and a shared ambition to succeed. Students are clearly aware of what they have to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum meets the needs of students exceptionally well and the specialist areas enrich students' experience in all year groups. A real strength of the curriculum is the way the business and enterprise theme is interwoven across all subjects. Years 10 and 11 are able to follow a very broad range of pathways that lead well on to post-16 studies. Gifted students have good opportunities to take accelerated routes towards early accreditation in external examinations. The citizenship and the personal, social and health education programmes contribute very effectively to the students' excellent personal development. The range and quality of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits is exceptional and students describe the wide and exciting range of opportunities as one of the outstanding things about their school. They are particularly pleased with the enrichment offered through the new languages specialism. Mandarin is a popular option.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The school provides an excellent level of care, guidance and support to all of its students. Attendance is carefully monitored, for example, and health and safety routines are conscientiously observed. Vulnerable students are especially well supported, not least through the school's excellent links with external agencies. The school is also quick to identify students whose personal difficulties create barriers to academic progress and has in place an extensive and effective mentoring programme. The students with physical disabilities have regular access to a wide range of therapies to help them improve their condition. Good procedures are in place to track the progress of pupils of all abilities and the information is used effectively by teachers to provide pupils with challenging targets but not as frequently as some parents would like to report on pupils' performance.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The impact of the inspirational leadership of the headteacher, who is exceptionally well supported by her senior team and fast-developing middle managers, is evident in the school's sustained success since the last inspection. Students are achieving exceptionally well in examinations but are at the same time participating in an ever growing range of wider opportunities. The school is strongly self-critical and senior managers encourage an open ethos of self-evaluation that pervades all levels of the school community. Teaching and support staff, parents and students, are all encouraged to give voice to how the school can improve even further. The school readily acknowledges that there is some point to parents' concerns over communications about students' progress and over the frequency of reports. It also is aware that it has more to do to ensure that some parents understand the importance of regular attendance. Governance is excellent. Governors hold the school to account very robustly and are deeply involved in its strategic development.

There is a relentless drive across the school to maintain the quality of the best teaching and to raise other practice to match it. Staff greatly appreciate the many professional development opportunities open to them, not least through the specialist areas, which are exceptionally well led. Boarding, too, is very well led and students report a high degree of contentment with their provision.

The school is rightly proud of its efforts to maintain an inclusive ethos. Students from the unit for those with physical impairment are well integrated into the mainstream wherever possible. The school's efforts to promote community cohesion both locally and within the wider community are excellent. It is able to demonstrate effectively the impact of its work so far, particularly with regard to creating harmony in local communities.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The effectiveness of boarding provision	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 April 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of Kings' School, Winchester, SO22 5PN

After our visit to Kings', we would like to share our findings with you. You made us very welcome and we would like to thank everyone who took the time to talk to us about the school and their work. Thank you, too, to the boarders who were happy to share their views and free time with us.

You think Kings' is an outstanding school. We agree with you that it offers you an excellent education. We are pleased that you are contributing to the school's future development through your enthusiasm for the enterprise activities and through your high level of cooperation with your teachers. You try to live up to your school motto of 'Una Laborantes - Working Together'.

You have an exceptional headteacher who is very well supported by able senior and middle managers and governors. They, together with your teachers, are working tirelessly on your behalf to make sure that you get the best possible education the school can provide. We know you appreciate this greatly and are confident that staff are always ready to help you. Many of you also make a difference to others through your support and care for other students, peer mentoring, your involvement in decision making within the school council and through projects in the community.

To make Kings' even better, we have asked your teachers to do even more to let your parents know how well you are progressing. We have also asked them to work more to make sure that all of your families understand the importance of regular attendance in term time. As for yourselves, you really must make a greater effort to use the new litter bins during the lunch hour. The school council has carefully considered their positioning. Please help them to keep the school grounds tidy.

We hope you will continue to work with your teachers to make Kings' the best it can be. We wish all of you at Kings' a very successful future.

Yours faithfully

Sheila Nolan

Lead Inspector