

King's School

Independent school inspection report

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Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

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Age group: 3–11

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Purpose and scope of the inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under section 162A of the Education Act 2002¹, as amended by schedule 8 of the Education Act 2005², the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

The inspection of registered provision³ was conducted under Section 49(2) of the Childcare Act 2006.⁴

This was a light touch inspection which focused principally on the quality of education provided by the school; its provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the arrangements for safeguarding pupils; and the improvements the school has made since its last inspection.

Information about the school

King's School is an independent Christian primary school for pupils aged from 3 to 11. It is situated in a quiet residential area close to the centre of Plymouth. It was established in 1989 and has grown steadily over the years to its current number of 121 full-time pupils. The school was purchased by its present owners, Cognita Schools, in February 2008. The school's aims are to help pupils to '*realise their potential in terms of academic achievement, aesthetic appreciation and spiritual awareness*', to encourage children to '*respect themselves as well as the rights, views and property of others*' and to develop in children '*a responsible and independent attitude towards their work*'. The school was last inspected in January 2007.

The King's Nursery opened in 1991 on the school site and is registered for 113 children, with 71 children currently attending part-time and 10 full-time. This was last inspected in March of this year as a result of the change in ownership. It was not inspected as part of this inspection.

The school has three Early Years Foundation Stage classes with a single year group in each class. The school takes children as rising three-year-olds through to the Reception class of rising five-year-olds.

¹ www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2002/ukpga_20020032_en_14#pt10-ch1-pb4-l1g162

² www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2005/ukpga_20050018_en_15#sch8

³ Schools which provide childcare for children from birth until the term in which they reach their third birthday must register this provision separately with Ofsted.

⁴ www.opsi.gov.uk/ACTS/acts2006/ukpga_20060021_en_4#pt3-ch2-pb4-l1g49

Evaluation of the school

King's School is a good school with an outstanding curriculum, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teaching throughout the school is good and this enables pupils to make good progress in a wide range of subjects. The strong Christian ethos of the school produces an inclusive, friendly environment with an emphasis on producing happy and well-rounded individuals. The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety and safeguarding of pupils are satisfactory. The school meets all of the regulations and since the last inspection has improved staff attendance at safeguarding training.

Quality of education

As at the time of the last inspection, the school's curriculum continues to be outstanding. It contributes strongly to the good overall quality of education, from the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards. It is based on the National Curriculum, with the core skills of mathematics, reading and writing given a greater proportion of time. French is taught from an early age and pupils are given very good opportunities to participate in speech, instrumental, drama and dance lessons which enhance the curriculum to very good effect. The good subject knowledge of specialist teachers in these subjects, and in information and communication technology, helps to increase pupils' knowledge and understanding very successfully. The school's strong leadership team regularly review the curriculum to ensure that it provides good subject coverage and clear routes of progression in learning and that it engages pupils fully. For example, a new mathematics resource is popular with pupils and allows work to be closely matched to their individual abilities, and the location of residential trips has been varied for different year groups to maintain pupils' interest. The school plans very carefully for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are provided with specific and effective reading, spelling and mathematics support, helping them to increase their confidence and rates of academic progress.

Throughout the school, the planning of the implementation of the curriculum is highly detailed and organises the work into topics where the core subjects, together with geography and history, are linked together with great success. This helps pupils to apply their learning in other subjects to very good effect and, combined with the frequent use of trips and visits, creates huge enjoyment and interest from pupils. The provision for art is strong, and pupils create high quality works in a wide range of media. The broad variety of art work on display includes felt-work and ceramic pieces and creates a bright and attractive school interior. The school grounds are used for observational drawings and increase pupils' appreciation and understanding of the natural environment very successfully.

A wide range of clubs during and after school are popular with older pupils and these are enjoyed by the majority of pupils. The school is currently without a hall. With

clear and purposeful direction from the headteacher, the school has worked diligently to ensure that pupils access football and tag rugby to supplement their physical education. Performances of dance and drama will continue in local venues and provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their good levels of skills to appreciative audiences.

Teaching and assessment throughout the school, including in the Early Years Foundation Stage, are good. Lessons are carefully planned and taught, so that they build on pupils' learning well and, as a result, pupils make good progress. Lessons invariably start with a recap of the previous lesson and introduce new learning clearly and imaginatively. For example, pupils reacted spontaneously in an art lesson to declare, 'That's really lovely' when presented with examples of illuminated letters on the interactive whiteboard. Good use of questions and specific instructions extend and improve individual pupils' skills to good effect.

Teachers have high expectations of pupils and lessons are conducted in a calm environment where pupils in the vast majority of lessons are very attentive and well behaved. The school's strong emphasis on speaking and listening skills, reading and writing ensures that pupils make good and frequently outstanding rates of progress in these areas. Pupils' opportunities to regularly develop their knowledge and understanding through science investigations vary from class to class and year to year.

Teachers know their pupils' abilities well and use ongoing informal assessments to gain a clear understanding of individual pupils. This knowledge is used effectively in lessons to anticipate individual difficulties and intervene with support where necessary. Work is carefully tailored to the individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Formal assessments are completed by individual teachers, who regularly use a range of diagnostic tests. The school has recently introduced detailed assessments in mathematics and science to more closely track pupils' progress in these subjects. In addition, the school uses the annual national testing arrangements for pupils in Year 2 and 6. Pupils' attainment in these tests is generally above national expectation and is particularly good in reading and writing. Through consultation with pupils, teachers compile portfolios of pupils' best work over each year. Transition to secondary school is well handled and care is taken to ensure that receiving schools are provided with relevant information and the portfolios of pupils' work.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

From the moment they join the school, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good. Overwhelmingly, pupils attend regularly and enjoy school. This is evident in the expressions on the faces of pupils as they engage with enthusiasm in lessons. They participate with excitement in preparing drama performances. The outdoor environment is used effectively to evoke moments of awe and wonder, for example as young children discover a mini-beast which they

have not seen before under a stone. A strong Christian ethos pervades every aspect of the school's life and most pupils feel that they are valued and treated with respect. They have developed a very good sense of their rights and responsibilities. They make rapid gains in understanding the needs of children across the globe who are less fortunate than themselves. For example, they enthusiastically prepare shoe boxes to be sent out to children in Moldova, thinking very sensitively about what items to put in them. Pupils are polite and courteous. Overall, their behaviour is good but there is a little boisterous behaviour at playtimes in certain year groups. The school has several procedures in place to monitor pupils' personal well-being, although a small minority of pupils express concerns about feeling safe. Their awareness of cultural diversity is very good and the traditions and religious festivals of minority ethnic pupils are regularly celebrated. Racial harmony is outstanding.

Safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety

The school's provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is satisfactory overall. There is a strong emphasis on providing a friendly, courteous and welcoming environment. The school is proud of its inclusive ethos and has taken seriously its duties under the Disability Discrimination Act. For example, a comprehensive survey and detailed action plan have led to recent improvements in providing railings on the steep school entrance and to provision of parking facilities for drivers who are disabled. A thorough annual fire safety assessment has been completed; fire drills are held regularly and alarms across the site are checked weekly. The school is aware that the demolition of the hall has resulted in areas of the grounds sealed off by temporary fences and that these currently present an unresolved additional hazard.

The new ownership has introduced rigorous staff recruitment procedures, with thorough checks on references and medical records now in place for all newly appointed staff. All essential policies and procedures have been established in line with legislation and guidance. School staff are trained in secure safeguarding procedures and are aware of the arrangements to record any concerns. Instances of bullying are rare and staff endeavour to deal appropriately with these as they arise. Residential and day trips are supervised effectively and staff produce suitable and comprehensive risk assessments in line with guidance.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Children's language, mathematical and creative skills are good and they achieve standards above that typical for age by end of Reception. The majority of children are able to write letters with a good degree of accuracy, have good number recognition and counting skills and they dance and sing with confidence. Detailed and thorough assessments are made using direct observations to record children's developments. These are used by the majority of staff to accelerate learning and raise achievement, but not consistently by all. A very good balance of child-initiated and adult-led

activities encourages children to be independent. Children show outstanding independence within the setting, many dressing for playtimes and washing their hands without being prompted. However, children do not have sufficient free-flow access to the outdoors to fully develop their independence and learning in all areas.

Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. With a supportive team they have created an inspiring curriculum and a stimulating learning environment which is both challenging and fun. There are good relationships with parents. Special books go home weekly and parents record their comments and provide examples of their child's special moments outside school. Staff use these comments from parents to plan activities which are based on children's interests. As a result, children clearly enjoy the time they spend in the setting, and this is evident in their smiling faces. The setting is inclusive and focuses on raising the achievement of all children. It makes good provision for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Existing care and safeguarding procedures and systems are appropriately focused on keeping children safe and secure.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets all of the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended January 2005.

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 opportunities for pupils to participate in practical scientific investigations and experiments are consistent throughout the school.

Early Years Foundation Stage

- ensure that assessments are used by all staff to accelerate pupils' learning and raise their achievement.

Inspection judgement recording form

outstanding	good	satisfactory	inadequate
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The quality of education

Overall quality of education		√		
How well the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of pupils	√			
How effective teaching and assessment are in meeting the full range of pupils' needs		√		
How well pupils make progress in their learning		√		

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Quality of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		√		
The behaviour of pupils		√		

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The overall welfare, health and safety of pupils			√	
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The quality of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision

How good are the outcomes for children in the EYFS?		√		
What is the quality of provision in the EYFS?		√		
How effectively is the EYFS led and managed?		√		
Overall effectiveness: how well does the school meet the needs of children in the EYFS?		√		

The quality of boarding provision

Evaluation of boarding provision				
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School details

Name of school	King's School		
DCSF number	879/6002		
Unique reference number	113595		
EY URN (for registered childcare only)	EY371506		
Type of school	Primary with Nursery		
Status	Independent		
Date school opened	1989		
Age range of pupils	3–11		
Gender of pupils	Mixed		
Number on roll (full-time pupils)	Boys: 62	Girls: 70	Total: 132
Number on roll (part-time pupils)	Boys: 55	Girls: 40	Total: 95
Number of pupils aged 0-3 in registered childcare provision	Boys: 44	Girls: 37	Total: 81
Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need	Boys: 0	Girls: 1	Total: 1
Annual fees (day pupils)	£5,550		
Address of school	King's School Hartley Road Mannamead Plymouth Devon PL3 5LW		
Telephone number	01752 771789		
Fax number	01752 770826		
Email address	school.secretary@kingsschool-plymouth.co.uk		
Headteacher	Mrs J Lee		
Proprietor	Cognita Schools Limited		
Reporting inspector	Mr Mark Lindfield HMI		
Dates of inspection	25 November 2009		