



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report
For Schools with Residential Provision**

King's College School Cambridge

February 2023

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School's Details

School	King's College School Cambridge			
DfE number	873/6000			
Registered charity number	1139422			
Address	King's College School West Road Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB3 9DN			
Telephone number	01223 365814			
Email address	office@kcs.cambs.sch.uk			
Headteacher	Mrs Yvette Day			
Chair of governors	The Revd Dr Stephen Cherry			
Age range	4 to 13			
Number of pupils on roll	400			
	Day pupils	355	Boarders	45
	EYFS	22	Juniors	272
	Seniors	106		
Inspection dates	31 January to 2 February 2023			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 King's College School is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. It was founded in 1441 and educates the choristers for King's College Chapel. The school has a governing body, chaired by the Dean of the College and containing a combination of other fellows of the college and independent governors, along with the Director of Chapel Music.
- 1.2 The school is divided into three sections: pre-prep, for pupils in Reception to Year 2, which includes an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting; juniors, for those in Years 3 and 4; and seniors for those in Years 5 to 8.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has made changes to its provision for female pupils. This has included the introduction of boarding accommodation and bursaries for them; and the foundation of a choral training programme for female choristers with its own choir, the 'Schola Cantorum'.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.4 The school seeks to build a deep commitment in pupils to kindness and respect for others, both in the school community and throughout the world. It aims to stimulate a curiosity for learning and creativity, and to provide pupils with the strength, courage and resilience to tackle life's challenges, both now and in the future.

About the pupils

- 1.5 Day pupils come from Cambridge and the surrounding area; some boarders are local but others come from further afield. On entry, pupils' ability is above average compared to those taking the same tests nationally. Currently there are no pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified 58 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 46 receive additional specialist help. English is an additional language (EAL) for 144 pupils, of whom 25 receive support with their language. The school identifies more able pupils from standardised assessments and provides additional curriculum opportunities for them. All the choristers, both male and female, have a curriculum designed to balance their academic development alongside their specialist musical training.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014, National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2022, and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place. Boarders have access to a suitable programme of activities.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.6 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Boarders are supported to develop good relationships with fellow pupils and staff which are based on mutual trust and respect. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.7 The standards relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 13, 17 and 21 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.8 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.9 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 3, 5–12, 15, 16 and 20 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.12 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 19 and 22 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.14 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 4, 7 and 23 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.15 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.16 **The standards relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.17 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.18 **The standards relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.20 **The standards relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 2 are met.**

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The **EDUCATIONAL QUALITY** inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils display an excellent level of knowledge across the range of subjects and apply this successfully to new situations.
- Pupils are confident verbally both in and out of lessons; they listen carefully to each other and produce excellent written work.
- Pupils demonstrate high-level skills of learning, analysing set tasks successfully and then moving on to present their conclusions logically.
- Pupils across the school achieve excellence in music, both as individuals and in ensembles.
- Pupils demonstrate a highly positive approach to their learning and involve themselves fully, both independently and collaboratively.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils are highly confident young people and develop the strength of character to deal with the challenges of demanding schedules.
- Pupils display an excellent understanding of how they should behave individually and are very caring of each other.
- Pupils are highly aware of the diversity of their community and show genuine respect for their differences, treating diversity as something that is perfectly normal.
- Pupils show a strong awareness of others and are extremely effective in the way in which they work together, such as in sport and music.

Recommendation

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

- Enable the older pupils to develop their leadership skills further, through more opportunities for their involvement in initiatives in areas which interest them.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 At all ages, pupils achieve excellent results, reflecting the school's attention to promoting rigour and diligence, such as through the development of its enrichment programme, called 'Cresco'. Pupils extend their understanding and achievement through the opportunity to study beyond the standard

curriculum. The school's assessment framework using standardised tests shows that pupils' attainment is well above national age-related expectations. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve results that are in line with the main cohort, helped by the valuable support provided by the school. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make strong progress. In their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, a large majority of parents felt the school promotes the pupils' progress successfully. This is evident in their work throughout the school. In Year 6, pupils' grasp of complex linguistic terms developed noticeably during an English lesson. In 2022, almost half of the pupils in Year 8 gained scholarships to independent senior schools, in a range of subjects, including music. This success is promoted by the commitment shown in teaching and the development of effective learning strategies which encourage thinking of a broad-based nature.

- 3.6 Pupils display an excellent level of knowledge in their work, often recalling information learnt previously, which they then apply successfully to a new context. They exhibit a wide range of skills in the creative and performance arts, achieving at the highest levels for their age in music, art and drama. This excellence is evident in the academic skills which support the strong progress they make. Pupils demonstrated how they develop their learning still further, such as when Year 6 pupils discussed the differences between primary colours in art and science perceptively, showing the significance of such differences. Children in Reception made excellent use of their knowledge of phonics when writing about what different dinosaurs might eat, taking into account their diets. Older pupils demonstrated excellent understanding of the factors affecting how quickly hot water will cool down, and the mechanics of cooling by convection. Pupils are helped in developing their skills and knowledge by teaching that is stimulating and challenges them to achieve their best. In their questionnaire responses, most agreed that the teachers know how to help them learn. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils also benefit from the excellent use of resources by teachers, which expands the horizons of their learning.
- 3.7 Pupils are highly confident communicators both in formal lessons and in the less formal surroundings of activities and breaktimes. They express their ideas extremely successfully; they listen to each other carefully and learn from such discussion, following it up with some excellent written work. Pupils in Year 2 produced excellent persuasive writing when composing a letter to The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). Pupils in Year 5 were highly articulate when discussing their ideas for capturing the flight of an eagle in their writing. Pupils in Year 7 were very expressive in their use of language to describe a painting by Degas, which they were studying as a stimulus for writing a poem. Pupils' written work about war included powerful imagery to illustrate their ideas. They had produced their own vivid poems, referring to war as a 'rolling tragedy' and quoting lines such as a 'boulevard of broken dreams'.
- 3.8 Pupils make full use of their excellent study skills. They research information and ideas for their tasks, using a wide range of sources. They then present their thoughts cogently in discussion and analyse these with the group viewpoints. From this, pupils move forward and produce conclusions which represent all the ideas presented. Pupils are willing to take risks in their learning in an environment that encourages questioning and thoughtful exploration of ideas and possibilities. During story time in Year 2, pupils became excited about the mention of the planet Pluto and a discussion ensued which resulted in them sharing knowledge about dwarf planets. Year 4 pupils drew out effective hypotheses on the expected outcomes of practical experiments into insulators and then analysed the actual outcomes accurately. Year 6 pupils showed an excellent level of analysis in considering the battle of Agincourt, understanding the confused nature of conflict and analysing its different stages. They explained the reasons why decisions were taken at particular times and then suggested plausibly what might happen next.
- 3.9 Pupils achieve excellent standards in their activities beyond the classroom. They demonstrate a very high standard in their music-making with two-thirds of pupils at the school involved in ensemble playing. The choristers perform at a particularly high level in chapel services. The choir for female pupils has also started singing services in the chapel, as well as in other local venues, reflecting their

rapid musical development as a group. A number of individuals have achieved national and international honours for their musical performance, both as soloists and in ensembles. Around a half of the pupils at the school take ABRSM examinations each year, some achieving grades at the highest level. Pupils are enthusiastic about playing chess and are extremely successful in this sport, currently being ranked the best junior school in the country. The first team has been defeated only once in the last 40 games. Pupils participate in a number of sports teams and many gain individual regional selection. The female pupils' hockey team have been finalists in national competitions. Pupils enter the UK Maths Challenge and achieve awards including gold, with a number going on to the Olympiad and Kangaroo stages. They have also been successful in competitions in other areas such as computing and languages.

- 3.10 Pupils are fully focused in lessons and clearly enthusiastic about their learning. They are equally strong working on their own as they are in groups, often taking the initiative in their tasks. Year 4 pupils worked effectively in groups of three in drama to produce their ideas of a dream land, which they then presented to the other groups. They could take the lead in suggesting an improvisation and then listen to other ideas and move their planning onwards. Year 8 pupils worked effectively on probability in mathematics on their own, showing excellent focus, but then they also shared their ideas with their partner, so they could all make progress. Boarders stated that they feel confident with their learning out of lessons because of the support they receive. They are comfortable in taking responsibility for their own progress. Parents commented on how the school encourages curiosity and an excitement for learning. Inspection evidence supports this view, showing the successful realisation of the school's aims to promote these traits.
- 3.11 Pupils are highly competent in their use of numeracy, evident not only in their mathematics lessons, where their levels of skill are strong, but also in their use of these skills in other subject areas. From an early age, pupils use the language of mathematics confidently, such as when counting the pieces of flesh to feed a dinosaur. Pupils demonstrated excellent ability in science when using collected data to construct scatter graphs. They also demonstrated their ability to estimate successfully the location of a particular number on a larger graph scale. In discussion, Year 6 pupils identified accurately the different ways in which they used numeracy across the curriculum. In their music-making, pupils clearly used their strong numerical skills to ensure their playing is suitably rhythmic. They showed clear understanding of why composers might change time signatures during a piece, to achieve a particular effect.
- 3.12 Pupils have strong skills in information and communication technology (ICT). They make excellent use of the tablets recently introduced in the school. They develop a broader understanding of the different uses of the technology, through their computing lessons. In a Year 7 Latin lesson, pupils researched ancient sanctuaries online and then collated the information onto the screen for all to share. Pupils enhanced their sporting skills in their games lesson, where they filmed their practice and then identified accurately how to develop their performance further. Pupils in Year 7 learn coding skills and showed their competence in using these skills in creative contexts, such as designing different applications. Pupils in Year 8 showed good use of spreadsheets in a task on affording a house. They looked at the costs involved and then created excellent graphics to illustrate the points they were making.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils are highly confident individuals overall who take an active role in their learning. They are not afraid to express an idea, even if it might not be the best one. Pupils understand that they can learn from their mistakes, and they are resilient enough to deal with setbacks and then move forward. In this they are helped by the non-judgemental atmosphere created by teaching. The choristers and Schola Cantorum when rehearsing are able to identify when they have made an error and

acknowledge this before correcting it next time. When required to explore their own feelings and characters in drama, pupils did so enthusiastically and some came up with excellent reflections about themselves. In discussions, pupils identified that the systems of reward and the praise they receive help to improve their confidence. Boarders demonstrate independence and resilience, through the manner, in which they deal with the demands on their time. They navigate busy days confidently within the supportive environment of the boarding house. In the questionnaires, most parents commented on how well the school develops their children's confidence.

- 3.15 Pupils show a strong sense of appropriate behaviour, demonstrating a well-developed sense of what is right and wrong. In this, they are not just conscious of their own individual behaviour but also of the need to be concerned for each other. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of and respect for systems of rules and understand the reasons for these. They have a clear understanding that rules are put into place to ensure everyone's safety. They can see that these work within the school and beyond in the wider community. Year 5 pupils identified that, to ensure fairness, everyone, including those who make the rules, should adhere to them. Year 6 pupils discussed the morality of prisoners being deliberately killed in war and identified that this action was somehow breaking the rules. Year 5 pupils in a personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lesson showed excellent awareness of the need for appropriate behaviour, outlining the need to respect boundaries with other people.
- 3.16 Pupils appreciate that the school is a very diverse community, and they are very respectful of each other's differences. Indeed, they do not see diversity as any form of notable issue but embrace it as something that is perfectly normal and an everyday matter. Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding of different cultural groups in religious studies lessons. Year 5 pupils showed a clear appreciation of Jewish traditions in the work they were producing about Jewish laws. The written work of pupils in Year 8 examined the concept of ethics coherently. Pupils described the differences between cultures and brought out perceptive ideas on why cultures might view ethical behaviour in alternative ways. Female pupils expressed in interview how much they valued the opportunity to board at the school, since its introduction in 2020.
- 3.17 Pupils work regularly in teams of varying natures, and they are extremely effective in working together to achieve their best. This is very apparent in their music-making. In ensembles, pupils constantly listen carefully to each other and then work hard to ensure that their individual playing or singing blends perfectly with the others. Equally, in sports activities, pupils support each other's contributions and work enthusiastically as a team to perform well, always encouraging rather than criticising. At breaktime, children in Reception played co-operatively in the sand making a racetrack for their cars. They explained that one of them was digging the sand out and then others were going to make it smooth. They recognised the importance of working together to achieve their goal. Pupils anticipate where they can help each other, rarely needing prompting or reminders to do so. Boarders explained how they work with each other to meet their dormitory targets and wholeheartedly support each other in doing so.
- 3.18 Pupils show confident skills in making choices about their work, stimulated by teaching which often requires them to be actively engaged in what to do next in their tasks. Year 3 pupils were fully involved when designing a mask together in art, choosing the materials, the design, the colours. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 feel very confident about deciding on the next stage of their education. They talk warmly of the support and advice they receive from their teachers which enables this confidence. Pupils consider the pros and cons of which school to choose effectively and then reach a decision. They also identify how their current studies will help them in the future, fulfilling the school's aim to give them resilience for their future lives. Some Year 4 pupils spoke about wanting to be an architect. They stated that, through their study of global sustainability, they had come to realise it might be more important to focus on becoming eco-architects.
- 3.19 Pupils demonstrate a genuine grasp of the deeper issues in their lives. They have embraced environmental concerns in school, achieving success in national competitions and even participating in the COP26 event. Pupils in Year 6 showed a heightened awareness about the environment and their

position in it. They discussed how in the future it might be necessary to live in the wild and considered thoughtfully whether some people in powerful positions do not always use their influence sensibly. In their consideration of such questions, pupils think beyond their own personal needs, and take into account the needs of those around them. Pupils are well prepared to engage in philosophical discussions in lessons and they bring the same thinking into any subject where such themes arise. In discussions, they expressed how their involvement in making music brings out an emotional response and that this is especially the case when they are in chapel, either as choristers or attending a service there. It is also clear from their performances that pupils feel the significance of the words they are singing. Year 6 pupils demonstrated in their written work a strong appreciation of non-material aspects of life when asked to match musical excerpts to landscape pictures. The artwork on display around the school demonstrates a depth of feeling, both in portraiture and landscapes.

- 3.20 Pupils have a clear understanding of the needs of the wider community, as well as their own. They support each other across different year groups; Year 8 pupils acting as buddies for the Pre-Prep and Juniors and the Pre-Prep and Juniors acting as peer 'playpals'. Older pupils also take on responsibilities in the school council and recently in their roles as prefects. Pupils raise funds each year to support a range of local, national and international charities, linking with schools in the developing world. Some of the older pupils expressed a wish to contribute even more to the community, taking initiative in projects they wish to fulfil, and said they would like further opportunities to do so. Inspection evidence identified that there is scope for pupils to develop leadership skills further than they already do.
- 3.21 Pupils feel confident in their abilities to stay safe online. They are supported in this by the school's provision for monitoring internet usage. Pupils talk confidently about how to eat healthily and understand the importance of eating a balanced diet, only taking one item from each food group. Pupils take full advantage of the plentiful opportunities provided for physical exercise. Pupils show real enthusiasm for physical education lessons and developing their fitness. They are also aware of the importance of looking after their emotional health. They take a sensible approach to their busy schedules, ensuring they take the time to step back and relax. In discussions and in their questionnaire responses, pupils spoke positively about the school's support for them in this respect. A very large majority expressed the view that the school encourages them to be healthy. Inspection evidence supports this view. Boarders make informed decisions about exercise and mental wellbeing, choosing between a variety of physical and quiet activities in the evenings.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with a group of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and chapel. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Gareth Price	Reporting inspector
Mr Carl Rycroft	Compliance team inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Paula Hobbs	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Dominic Spencer	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, IAPS school)