

School inspection report

27 to 29 February 2024

The King's School Canterbury

25 The Precincts

Canterbury

CT1 2ES

The Independent Schools Inspectorate is appointed by the Department for Education to inspect association independent schools in England. Our inspections report on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards and other applicable regulatory requirements are met, collectively referred to in this report as 'the Standards'.

Contents

SUMMARY OF INSPECTION FINDINGS	3
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS THE STANDARDS.....	5
RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS.....	5
SECTION 1: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	6
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT, AND GOVERNANCE.....	7
SECTION 2: QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	8
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RECREATION	9
SECTION 3: PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING.....	10
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING	11
SECTION 4: PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY.....	12
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO PUPILS’ SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EDUCATION AND CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY	13
SAFEGUARDING	14
THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE SCHOOL MEETS STANDARDS RELATING TO SAFEGUARDING	14
SCHOOL DETAILS	15
INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL.....	16
INSPECTION DETAILS	17

Summary of inspection findings

1. Pupils benefit from a broad and vibrant curriculum which emphasises character education and develops pupils' skills, resilience, and self-awareness.
2. Leaders exhibit the skills necessary to execute their duties professionally and compassionately. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school. Self-evaluation is carried out rigorously, and leaders identify and mitigate risk effectively. Teachers are skilled and possess a secure subject knowledge, and well-planned lessons support pupils' progress and development of skills such as critical thinking and communication. Pupils perform highly in national assessments.
3. Leaders develop pupils' spiritual awareness through the integration of the chaplaincy into the pastoral and academic framework of the school. This provides pupils with opportunities to reflect on their educational journey and choose different pathways to express their beliefs. Pupils are happy and hard-working ambassadors of the school, and they share a collective responsibility to support their local community.
4. Leaders and managers have designed the school house system to incorporate both day and residential pupils. This creates an inclusive environment and serves to actively promote friendship bonds and pupils' wellbeing. A dedicated health centre and comprehensive pastoral care system further support pupils' welfare. Physical education plays a key role for pupils' physical wellbeing, and leaders provide a considerable range of activities and sports to participate in.
5. Leaders encourage pupils to develop a sense of charity, outreach, and service, supported by the formation of pupil-led groups and committees. Pupils are confident to share their opinions, and views with the school. They feel listened to and valued. Pupils demonstrate a mutual respect for each other.
6. Pupils at the International College immerse themselves in the British education they receive. Leaders have created a dedicated setting for overseas pupils which promotes an understanding of British values and institutions, helping these pupils to transition successfully onto A-level courses.
7. Safeguarding is effective and embedded in the culture of the school in all areas. Staff are well trained, enabling them to support pupils in the whole school community. Leaders and governors keep rigorous oversight of safeguarding procedures. Leaders maintain effective relationships with local safeguarding partners. Safer recruitment checks are carried out with diligence and accuracy.
8. The careers programme supports pupils as they prepare to move on from school. This is primarily centred around destination colleges and while effective, does not always consider a wide range of pathways that may be relevant to pupils.
9. Pupils who have specific needs are well cared for at The King's School Canterbury. Systems are in place to identify, monitor and address adjustments that need to be made to the curriculum and extra-curricular programmes, providing pupils with an appropriate level of academic support and care.
10. The house system plays a central role for day and boarding pupils, providing a central focus to many of their competitions, activities, and social groups. Arrangements for boarding provision are

appropriate and effective in both the senior school and International College. Staff are well trained and create a warm and nurturing environment for pupils to feel comfortable in their surroundings.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance, are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that the careers programme provides pupils with a wider range of options to consider for their next steps after leaving school.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

11. Leaders, managers, and governors have created a culture of care, warmth, ambition, and collaboration at King's School Canterbury. The Christian ethos pervades all aspects of the school, while leaders and pupils celebrate all faiths, religions and beliefs. There are many opportunities for pupils and leaders to collaborate, for example, in the many initiatives and clubs that are on offer.
12. Leaders actively promote the wellbeing of pupils by prioritising their physical and emotional health, while still challenging them academically and ensuring that they receive a holistic education. The extensive pastoral care programme, 'life matters' lessons, and the health care provision, all support the health and welfare of pupils.
13. The school offers a wide range of GCSE, A-level and BTEC courses which, coupled with the provision at the International College, comprise courses to suit the diverse cohorts of pupils. The inclusive, and comprehensive curriculum emphasises the importance of the creative arts. For example, all pupils participate confidently in congregational singing in assemblies and in the cathedral, as well as a house song competition. These opportunities have a positive impact on pupils' understanding and aesthetic appreciation of music.
14. A thorough programme of self-evaluation takes place which has identified areas for development in the school provision, for example, with the careers programme. Leaders regularly undertake surveys and listen carefully to the views of stakeholders. Leaders implement policies appropriately and accurately. Governors provide challenge and effective oversight, with specific responsibilities for individual members of the board including safeguarding, physical risks, and pastoral care. For example, the safeguarding governor works closely with the senior team on safer recruitment matters.
15. Separate to the main campus, the International College is overseen by leaders and governors with the same diligence as the senior school. The nurturing approach from leaders encourages pupils to work without a fear of failure, while acclimatising to education in United Kingdom. Pupils develop communication skills well in this setting.
16. Leaders take a diligent approach to the management of risk, and they execute their duties appropriately. Risk assessments are thorough and consider individual pupils' needs and the context of the school.
17. Complaints are handled effectively with diligent oversight from leaders and governors. Logs of incidents are detailed. Leaders evaluate and analyse the information to identify any trends.
18. The school complies with the Equality Act 2010. There is a suitable accessibility plan in place which considers the physical and curriculum needs of pupils. It is reviewed each year and recent adaptations have included physical adjustments to buildings to allow for ease of pupil access. Teaching does not discriminate against any groups of pupils.
19. Boarding staff are well trained. The day and boarding houses are appropriately maintained, and well led. Leaders and governors oversee boarding provision and accommodation effectively.
20. Leaders communicate regularly with parents and report to them periodically about their child's progress. Provision of information to parents is detailed and accurate. Leaders have built strong

relationships with external agencies and this has a positive impact on pupils' wellbeing and understanding of the support available to pupils.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

21. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

22. The curriculum is thoughtfully planned and is broad and balanced. Pupils participate in a wide range of subjects and activities which develop intellectual, physical, and creative skills. Pupils of all abilities enrich their learning further through the comprehensive extra-curricular programme, and the additional programme of co-curricular clubs and societies. These include debating clubs, academic specialisms, sports and community opportunities. As a result, pupils are busy, energetic and collaborative learners.
23. There is a rigorous framework for assessment in place which ensures that pupils' progress is monitored and tracked effectively. Leaders encourage each subject to have autonomy and develop their own identity, thus creating academic departments which deliver a bespoke and suitable curriculum with high expectations. Pupils take appropriate responsibility for their own learning, especially when completing homework assignments in the boarding houses.
24. Pupils can follow the GCSE and A-level programme at school. Additionally, BTECs in specific subject areas, such as physical education and business are available. This accommodates pupils' different interests and abilities. The school provides pupils with a wide-ranging extension programme that includes leadership opportunities and taking an EPQ.
25. Pupils are ambitious for their futures. They make good progress as they move from Year 9 to Year 13. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning, and are self-motivated. There is an emphasis placed on independent learning. Effective written and verbal feedback to pupils helps them understand how to improve their work.
26. The International College provides a supportive platform for overseas pupils to explore and engage with GCSEs. Here, pupils can immerse themselves in either one or two-year courses. Staff at the International College are well trained and sensitive to the needs of these learners. The curriculum is adapted to allow pupils to thrive. For example, accreditation in subjects like Global Perspectives, as well as other GCSEs, ensures that pupils' experience is tailored to their needs. Teaching in the International College has a positive impact upon pupils' progress and builds confidence in pupils' ability to grasp new concepts.
27. Lessons are brought to life by using dynamic examples. The quality of teaching is consistent and engages pupils readily, impacting their confidence and progress to good effect. Positive relationships between pupils and teachers underpin their learning in both the senior school and the International College. Pupils' outcomes in national assessments are above average, especially in music.
28. The curriculum considers the needs and aptitudes of pupils. Support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is carefully planned, reviewed, and delivered with sensitivity and purpose. Pupils are supported with individual target setting and bespoke plans. Staff are trained to provide appropriate adjustments in lessons to support learning. Pupils who have SEND make good progress.
29. Staff are trained appropriately to support the needs of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). Staff assess their needs and review the impact of the support pupils receive. Pupils develop their fluency in oracy work and in class discussions. Individualised learning plans provide a suitable scaffold to develop their knowledge of English.

30. Leaders have placed an emphasis on the provision for music, art, photography, ceramic, dance, and design and technology and other such subjects. Pupils of all abilities participate in congregational choir with performances at a high level. Work in the creative arts culminates in King's Week during the summer term, where many pupils participate in this popular festival for performing arts. Pupils develop their confidence and creativity from these activities.
31. Boarders are given appropriate time, space, and support during prep time in the evenings, and they appreciate the guidance of staff when they are struggling with their work. Pupils are encouraged to learn independently and be responsible for their own organisation and homework programme. They develop as mature and independent learners. The boarding experience enriches the pupils' educational journey due to the supportive relationships between staff and pupils which creates a professional and warm environment.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation

- 32. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Section 3: Pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

33. There is a suitable personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and relationships and sex education (RSE) programme which takes the form of 'life matters' lessons. These enable pupils to develop their self-awareness and self-knowledge. Pupils learn, for example, about staying safe online, marriage, disability, and celebrating different beliefs. The RSE and PSHE programmes are delivered effectively by well trained teachers, and this has a positive impact upon pupils' learning.
34. The FREDIE 'Friendship, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusivity and Equity' initiative encourages pupils to create forums to discuss issues in school, about themselves and their peers, as well as current political and social issues from around the world. Pupils learn how to cope with a range of issues such as relationship building.
35. At the heart of the school is the house system, which caters for both day and boarding pupils. Loyalty and pride are just two of the values that the 'house spirit' engenders, and pupils gain their 'voice' within this structure. This enables them to share their views openly and feel that it is safe to be different within this inclusive community. Pupils celebrate the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion and demonstrate this in their everyday interactions with each other. A range of pupil-led inclusion groups provide a collective opportunity to recognise and value the differences between people.
36. Pupils are polite, courteous, and openly appreciative of the staff. Pupils are well behaved and respectful of their peers and staff. Leaders implement the behaviour and antibullying policies effectively by communicating their expectations of pupils consistently and frequently, in lessons, assemblies and around the school. Pupils are aware of the high standards that are set, and they strive to achieve them. Logs and records of incidents are clear, and leaders evaluate outcomes and patterns that emerge, as well as monitoring sanctions. There are periodic reviews of policy and practice. There are few occurrences of poor behaviour or bullying at the school.
37. Pupils' physical health develops through the substantial array of sports, activities, and outdoor programmes. Fixtures in a variety of sporting areas are frequent and carefully timetabled, and pupils compete in regional and national competitions. Sporting tours and excursions under The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) and the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) are examples of how leaders enrich the experiences of the pupils. Pupils in the International College also experience a range of opportunities to develop their fitness and challenge themselves both physically and mentally. As a result, pupils across the school develop their interpersonal and teamwork skills.
38. Pastoral leaders support pupils in their understanding of morality and spirituality. This reinforces the Christian values, while celebrating all faiths and religions in the school. Pupils can always access the Chaplaincy team, which contributes to the effective pastoral care system.
39. Leaders maintain the premises well, and promote health and safety. Leaders and governors have mitigated against risks by providing effective supervision during the school day and for boarders at night. Fire safety is diligently overseen and there is a comprehensive system in place to ensure pupils' safety. Pupils are educated in how to stay safe when visiting the city and its environs. The International College boarding accommodation is equally well maintained.

40. The International College, while physically separate to the senior school, follows the same principles of both pastoral care, and health and safety processes. Fire drills and logs, safety equipment and staff training, as well as risk assessments on both sites are assiduously overseen by leaders and governors. Supervision is well planned and provides a balance for pupils to have personal space as well as feeling supported. Boarders feel well looked after and safe in their houses.
41. The health centre provides a suitable space for boarders and day pupils who are unwell or injured. Fully trained medical staff and secure resources allow for pupils' physical and emotional wellbeing to be cared for. There is suitable first aid provision and medication which are administered effectively for day pupils and boarders.
42. There is a diligent approach to maintaining attendance and admission registers. Leaders are aware that absence from school can be a sign of a safeguarding concern. There is appropriate communication between the relevant departments within the school and the local authority, who are contacted appropriately when pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.
43. Boarders feel safe in well-maintained accommodation. Boarding staff are well trained and provide suitable care and support for boarders for whom they are responsible. Boarders receive a thorough induction and settle quickly into the routines of school. The individuality of each house is celebrated by day and boarding pupils, and this cultivates a culture of loyalty and pride within the setting.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 4: Pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

45. Pupils show respect for, and appreciation of, other cultures. Debating of the issues of equality and diversity, and the International Culture Fair are examples of how leaders promote a sophisticated and global understanding of life in society. Leaders prioritise critical thinking in the curriculum when considering matters of inclusivity and as a result, the school community reflects a fundamental belief in mutual respect.
46. The culture established in the International College encourages pupils to voice their opinions, and to be respectful in all communications. This enriches their understanding of each other and the modern world. Pupils in the International College can articulate their ideas eloquently and with reasoning. They follow a similarly effective programme to the senior school to support their understanding of the fundamental British values.
47. Pupils explore the modern world through physical, human, and economic life lessons. For example, pupils learn how to stay safe online including by learning about scams. Leaders prioritise the value of practical aspects of learning. In A-level geography, pupils visited Northern Ireland to investigate the economic elements to consider when opening a mineral mine, deepening their understanding of complex economic processes.
48. Leaders encourage pupils to start their own clubs and groups. Through the curriculum, assemblies, the extra-curricular clubs and the boarding programme, pupils are taught the principles to distinguish between right and wrong, respect for civil and criminal law, and democracy. For example, pupils vote for school council representatives, lead on charity initiatives, and are consulted over the choice of pupil leaders in the school.
49. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles, from house prefects to committee chairs, and they find that this extra responsibility develops and enhances essential social skills. Older pupils act as appropriate role models for younger pupils, and there is a culture of collaboration between year groups.
50. Through the 'young enterprise' scheme, and partnership work with the external agencies, pupils consider how they can have a positive impact on society. Pupils learn about finances and economic systems and about mortgages and tax. Pupils in both the senior school and the International College value the substantial engagement they have with the local community. Partnerships with schools and agencies serve to support pupils' education about the wider world, and they develop self-awareness and confidence from such ventures.
51. The careers programme delivers impartial advice on matters of university applications. Visiting speakers enrich the programme and offer pupils an insight into life beyond their school. For younger years, the programme focuses mainly on examination choices and constructing curriculum vitae. However, there is a lack of breadth in the career pathways that are presented to pupils. Therefore, not all pupils get to see the full range of options that are available to them.
52. Leaders have established links with many local groups, allowing pupils to develop their understanding of the importance of service to others. Through their outreach work and

volunteering, pupils support local schools and charities. For example, some pupils help tend to a number of graveyards in the city, providing support to local churches.

53. Through the charity committee pupils are provided with a platform through which to vote on charities to support, encouraging mutual respect through the democratic processes that take place. Pupils act as positive role models and value the notion of being able to serve others. They are proud to be responsible and active members of their local community. Through lessons in subjects such as history and 'life matters', pupils learn about national institutions including government bodies and the stock market, and the rule of law.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society

- 54. All the relevant Standards are met.**

Safeguarding

55. Safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained for their role and have a suitable amount of time to perform their duties. The safeguarding policy is understood by staff, who are suitably trained. The policy is implemented effectively. Appropriate procedures are in place to deal with low-level concerns or allegations.
56. Leaders promote the welfare of pupils by working constructively with external agencies and local safeguarding partners when the situation requires it. Staff understand the thresholds for referring safeguarding concerns, for example, those related to extremism or child on child abuse. Staff are aware of how to raise and report any concerns. The staff code of conduct is understood, and leaders are vigilant in their oversight of safeguarding matters.
57. Induction processes for new staff are comprehensive and safer recruitment checks are carried out with diligence. The record of appointments contains accurate information about the checks that are carried out. A suitable number of staff are appropriately trained to carry out interviews effectively.
58. Safeguarding arrangements to promote the wellbeing of boarders are clear and understood by staff and pupils. The International College has its own safeguarding team which communicates effectively with the senior school.
59. Governors provide suitable oversight of safeguarding, and there is a dedicated member of the board who leads on such issues. There is regular communication between the governing board and the safeguarding team, and these interactions reflect a detailed analysis of past and current safeguarding cases.
60. Pupils are educated about safeguarding risks and how to deal with them. The school uses suitable software to support the filtering of inappropriate online websites, and staff diligently monitor pupils' use of the internet. Accordingly, pupils feel safe in school and in their boarding houses.
61. Safeguarding records are kept in accordance with current statutory guidance.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

- 62. All the relevant Standards are met.**

School details

School	The King's School Canterbury
Department for Education number	886/6048
Registered charity number	307942
Address	The King's School Canterbury 25 The Precincts Canterbury Kent CT1 2ES
Phone number	01227 595501
Email address	head@kings-school.co.uk
Website	www.kings-school.co.uk
Proprietor	The Kings School Governors
Chair	Count Benoit De Vitry D'Avaucourt
Headteacher	Ms Jude Lowson
Age range	13 to 18
Number of pupils	910
Number of boarding pupils	695
Date of previous inspection	29 November 2022

Information about the school

63. The King's School Canterbury is a co-educational day and boarding school situated in Canterbury. The school includes an International College for overseas pupils in Year 9, 10 and 11. The school is a charity, overseen by a board of 16 governors with five members of the board drawn from the Canterbury Cathedral Foundation. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2023.
64. There are 13 boarding houses as well as the International College, together with three separate houses for day pupils.
65. The school has identified 210 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
66. English is an additional language for 443 pupils.
67. The school states its aims are to anchor a 21st century education within what it sees as the illustrious history of the oldest school in the country. It intends to create a close knit and warm-hearted community that is spiritually aware, historically informed and appreciative of aesthetic beauty. The school seeks to provide excellent pastoral care so that pupils can grow up in a secure and nurturing environment where individuals value the success of others as much as they enjoy their own triumphs. The school aims to encourage pupils to discover their gifts and then share them in an unselfish way with their contemporaries, and to build up the subsequent skills and understanding to put their capabilities to good effect in future life, as well as to lead fulfilled lives based on sound principles of giving to others and seeking self-knowledge and wisdom.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

27 to 29 February 2024

68. A team of eleven inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

69. Inspection activities included:

- observation of lessons, some in conjunction with school leaders
- observation of registration periods and assemblies
- observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection
- discussions with the chair and other governors
- discussions with the head, school leaders, managers and other members of staff
- discussions with pupils
- visits to the learning support area and facilities for physical education
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school

70. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

Independent Schools Inspectorate

CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

For more information, please visit isi.net