

School inspection report

7 November 2023 to 9 November 2023

Kingsley School

Northdown Road
Bideford
EX39 3JR

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	4
Recommended next steps	4
Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance	5
Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation	6
Section 3: Pupils’ physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing	8
Section 4: Pupils’ social and economic education and contribution to society.....	10
Safeguarding.....	11
School details	12
Information about the school	13
Inspection details	13

Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors ensure that leaders utilise appropriate skills and knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. As a result, the standards are met, and the wellbeing of pupils is actively promoted.
2. The recently introduced curriculum includes provision for pupils to take a 'pathways course' to support their academic lessons. However, leaders have yet to evaluate the impact of this new curriculum, particularly on pupils in final examination years.
3. Pupils make good progress overall and attain results at GCSE and A level that are above average. However, some teaching does not challenge pupils to develop their skills further. This results in lower levels of motivation, engagement and progress during these lessons.
4. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) meets these pupils' needs effectively and ensures that they make good progress along with their peers.
5. A new assessment and tracking system to monitor pupils' progress in the senior school is in place, intended to help raise academic standards when any pupils underperform. However, this assessment and tracking system is not yet consistently used by all teaching staff to achieve this. Pupils are well behaved and cooperative in class. However, the management of senior pupils' behaviour out of lessons is not consistently as effective as it is typically across the school. Any issues with bullying are dealt with quickly and appropriately.
6. Health and safety arrangements are effective. Leaders ensure that the premises and accommodation are suitably maintained.
7. The careers programme is appropriate and takes into account Gatsby benchmarks. Some of the recent developments to the careers programme are not yet fully established in Years 7 to 9. As a result, some pupils feel less well supported by the careers programme than others.
8. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and reflect current statutory guidance. Safeguarding leads are appropriately qualified and experienced and have sufficient authority in the school to carry out their safeguarding duties. Pupils feel safe in school and are clear that there is a range of trusted adults they can turn to if they have concerns.

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:

- review the impact of the recently introduced curriculum to ensure that it meets pupils' needs well
- ensure that the recently introduced assessment and tracking system is consistently used by all senior school teaching staff to help raise academic standards
- ensure that all lessons provide sufficient challenge for pupils to enable them to make consistently good progress
- ensure that the management of senior pupils' behaviour out of lessons is consistently as effective as it is typically
- ensure that all pupils feel sufficiently supported by the careers programme.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Governors maintain effective oversight of the school. They ensure that those with leadership and management responsibilities have appropriate skills and knowledge, carry out their roles effectively and promote the wellbeing of pupils.
10. Leaders demonstrate a clear vision for the school. The school development plan contains clear performance indicators, which leaders use to evaluate the success of actions taken, designed to improve provision and outcomes.
11. There is a conscientious and methodical approach to the assessment of risk. For example, leaders carry out checks on activities to make certain that staff have digested and follow the risk assessments for them. They check the continued suitability of risk assessments following trips. Risk assessments are thorough and include consideration of pupils' welfare needs.
12. The school meets its duties under equality legislation. For example, the school maintains a suitable plan to enable any disabled children to access the curriculum and the premises.
13. The school provides parents and prospective parents with all required information. Much of this is available on the school website, including the safeguarding and complaints policies. Parents receive two reports per term and are invited to attend parents' evenings to discuss their child's progress. In the preparatory department, parents are invited to attend 'show my work' events, where they can see examples of their child's work.
14. The school responds to parental complaints appropriately. The complaints log records actions taken in response to complaints received.
15. Effective systems are in place for the safeguarding of pupils, including comprehensive induction training for new staff, appropriate annual training for all staff and the provision of clear policies and guidance. Leaders promote a culture where concerns from pupils and staff are heard, recorded and dealt with effectively.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

16. Leaders in the senior school have introduced a new curriculum in which all pupils follow a 'pathway' that encourages them to pursue passions and interests and explore new activities. There is a strong emphasis on developing self-confidence and wellbeing through the medium of outdoor pursuits and sustainability studies in the 'Earth Centre'. Teaching ensures that pupils gain knowledge and develop skills across the curriculum. For example, in music, younger pupils from Reception upwards play a musical instrument to a high standard, while in English, older pupils read to a high standard and can critique the texts that they engage with well.
17. Teachers demonstrate their subject knowledge in well-planned lessons, which make effective use of resources and clear explanations. For example, in the prep school, English teachers use story maps to develop pupils' ability to structure their own writing, and in mathematics, teachers use clear diagrams to develop understanding of partitioning. Older pupils developed their mathematical understanding by engaging with a computer game involving racing cars. Information and communication technology (ICT) devices have been introduced this year and pupils are keen to use them to undertake research tasks when given the opportunity.
18. A system of assessment and tracking has been introduced to ensure that pupils and their parents are well informed about progress. Academic leaders monitor and put in place additional support where required in order to ensure pupils make progress. This system is new in school and its use by the teaching staff is inconsistent. Results at GCSE and A level are above average with pupils gaining grades in line with those expected from their starting points.
19. Pupils who have SEND are well supported either in the classroom or in the specialist units attached to the school. They achieve in line with their peers. The department is well organised and the support systems in place are regularly reviewed and modified. Teaching assistants are deployed in classrooms to ensure that help is targeted to those in need. Leaders of the provision for pupils who have SEND are highly effective at communicating policies and procedures to colleagues and maintaining working relationships with external agencies for children with additional needs and education, health and care plans (EHC). Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) attend English lessons in small groups, which are effective in developing fluency in English.
20. Many pupils in the senior school respond positively to the school's policy on not setting homework to make available time for preparation for assessments or reading around the subject. However, some pupils in examination year groups are keen to receive additional guidance to ensure they use this time effectively.
21. In some lessons, teaching lacks sufficient challenge to extend the knowledge and understanding of the pupils, including those with higher prior attainment. In these lessons pupils are less involved in their learning. Pupils are cooperative in class and respond well to teacher instruction. When pupils are given the opportunity to work collaboratively, to test and apply their knowledge, they do so with enthusiasm and work effectively with their peers.
22. In the preparatory school pupils are enabled to be independent learners and take pride in their work. They are reflective in lessons. Staff help these pupils understand how best to make progress in their learning and become prepared for their transition to the senior school. Resources, displays, one-to-one support and well-planned lessons all aid and support further reinforcement of knowledge and skills.

23. A rigorous assessment framework is in place in the early years and lessons are well structured. Staff in the early years respond to the interests of the children, adapting and modifying plans. Children are highly engaged in their learning, and take part in an engaging range of activities, both inside and outside the classroom. Children of all abilities make good progress and the school meets the emotional and social needs of the pupils in its care.
24. Pupils engage in a wide variety of recreational experiences, ranging from outdoor activities on the school grounds to the 'surf school and 'Earth Centre' provision. Pupils clearly enjoy these extra-curricular options. Boarders participate in a range of activities at weekends, which help to develop the community spirit in the boarding houses and extend their social skills.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. The pupil body values the inclusive nature of the school community. Leaders and staff model and promote the importance of respectful interactions between pupils of different gender, need or background.
26. The comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme promotes the school's positive and inclusive ethos and helps develop pupils' self-confidence. Ethics and morals lessons and the balanced programme of reflective assemblies ensure pupils develop spiritual and moral understanding.
27. Pupils behave well in lessons and respond to the clear expectations of teachers. Teachers immediately challenge any incidents of discriminatory language. As a result, such incidences are rare. The management of pupils' behaviour out of lessons is typically effective and changes to supervision arrangements have led to fewer behavioural incidents taking place. However, the management of behaviour out of lessons is not always as successful in the senior school. .
28. The school deals with bullying effectively. Logs are kept of all incidents and the appropriate follow-up actions taken.
29. Children in the early years take on roles of responsibility, such as helping the teacher or becoming a class captain, giving them a sense of pride in their school. They develop strong relationships with staff who understand their strengths and weaknesses and show an understanding of each other's needs.
30. Pupils feel that there is a range of adults they can turn to if they need advice or support on difficult issues. They report high levels of support from their teachers in this regard. Pupils feel that the school protects and promotes their mental wellbeing.
31. Boarding routines promote independence, such as through organising their own laundry. Boarding facilities are sensitively arranged to support pupils with specific needs. The privacy of boarders is respected. Personal possessions are protected, regular laundry provision is in place and a balanced menu and snacks are available. Boarders know how to contact a member of staff at all times including during the night. Relationships between boarders and day pupils are positive and harmonious. There are regular boarding house meetings where pupil views are listened to and acted upon. Boarders are confident in the support available to them.
32. The premises and accommodation, including the boarding houses are well maintained. Health and safety checks and maintenance are implemented effectively, and appropriate measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire. There are regular evacuation drills including at night for boarders. Staff receive appropriate fire safety training.
33. The provision of first aid and medical care is well planned and effective and pupils speak highly of the support of the medical staff. The medical centre has suitable accommodation for the care of pupils who are unwell. All early years staff are trained in paediatric first aid and many other staff receive regular first aid training.
34. The school maintains admissions and attendance registers as required. Staff promote high attendance effectively and follow up any absences that may occur.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

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

35. Pupils' learning about society and the wider world throughout the curriculum is supported by appropriate educational visits such as to the Belgian war cemeteries. Teachers relate the subject matter to wider societal and cultural themes. Pupils develop their understanding of economics through the PSHE and 'life skills' programmes and can apply this effectively in their life. For example, pupils in the sixth form have initiated 'Toastie Fridays' with costings and use the profits from this to subsidise the sixth-form prom. The school encourages pupils to accept responsibility for their behaviour and helps them to distinguish between right and wrong. This begins in the early years, where children learn the importance of sharing, taking turns and listening to others.
36. Pupils engage in work experience programmes in both Year 10 and Year 12, which enable them to learn more about themselves and the world of work. In Years 7 to 9 careers provision is developing with the recent introduction of Morrisby profiling, the adoption of the Gatsby benchmarks and an enhanced guest speaker programme. Other recent initiatives have included an expanded careers fair and a more developed work experience programme. Pupils receive appropriate advice and support about careers choices and higher education pathways. However, while some pupils receive detailed support to enable them to plan next steps and apply for the next stage in their education with confidence, others are less well supported.
37. Pupils are encouraged to engage in acts of service in their community, both through structured schemes such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (DofE) and through their activities in the sixth form. Pupils raise money for local and national charities and take part in such schemes as the Christmas Shoebox appeal. Pupils support each other through taking on roles of responsibility in the school, such as by acting as prefects.
38. Pupils develop their social skills by being part of a team, such as in the annual school productions performed in the school theatre and musical performances in the local community. These experiences enable pupils to work collaboratively towards a shared endeavour. Pupils also apply their social skills to work experience in the local community.
39. Pupils develop well their understanding of democracy. For example, class captains and members of the pupil school council are voted for in a democratic manner. Through various committees and groups, the pupils put forward suggestions for improvements, such as about the way lunch queues are managed.

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

All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

40. Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils are comprehensive and effective. The school's safeguarding policy and practice are in line with local inter-agency procedures. The school liaises effectively and in a timely manner with relevant external agencies when concerns arise. All staff receive update training annually along with regular briefings. Safeguarding leads are appropriately qualified and experienced and have sufficient authority in the school to carry out their statutory duties.
41. Staff and pupils are aware of the dangers of online activity and the school has appropriate filtering and monitoring systems in place. The potential vulnerability of pupils who have SEND is understood and taken into consideration when dealing with safeguarding concerns.
42. Safeguarding leaders are well identified throughout the school, and there is a range of trusted adults to whom pupils can turn if they have concerns. Staff feel confident escalating issues to the safeguarding team.
43. All required safer recruitment checks are completed for staff, governors and volunteers, and a suitable single central register of appointments is kept.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	Kingsley School
Department for Education number	878/6030
Registered charity number	306709
Address	Northdown Road Bideford EX39 9JR
Website	www.kingsleydevon.com
Proprietor	Kingsley Education Ltd
Chair	Mrs Claudia Bickford-Smith
Headmaster	Mr Robert Pavis
Age range	2 to 18
Number of pupils	434
Number of boarding pupils	77
Number of children in the early years registered setting	66
Date of previous inspection	19 to 21 March 2019

Information about the school

44. Kingsley School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils based in Bideford, Devon. The school is registered with the Council for the Registration of Schools teaching dyslexic pupils (CReSTeD). The school is owned and operated by Kingsley Education Ltd. A local advisory board acts as a governing body and reports directly to Kingsley Education Ltd. The current headmaster took up his post in February 2022, and the current chair of governors took up her position in June 2023.
45. There are three boarding houses on site. One is for female pupils aged 7 to 11 years, one is for male pupils of the same age, and one is a co-educational sixth-form house.
46. The early years provision is housed in its own accommodation with attached outside recreational space.
47. The school has identified 88 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Fifty-one pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
48. English is an additional language for 40 pupils.
49. The school states that its aims are for each pupil to achieve success and happiness through positive mental health and wellbeing. It intends for this to be achieved through the core values: 'learn, give, be active, appreciate and connect'.

Inspection details

Inspection dates 7 to 9 November 2023

50. A team of five inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.
51. Inspection activities included:
- lesson observations
 - discussions with pupils
 - examination of pupils' work with the pupils
 - discussions with members of staff
 - observation of a sample of extra-curricular activities
 - observation of form meetings
 - visiting the facilities for the youngest pupils
 - visiting the learning support areas, medical centre and boarding houses
 - discussions with subject leads and senior teachers
 - discussion with members of academic and support staff
 - examination of curriculum and other documentation provided by the school.
52. 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.

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