

School inspection report

27 to 29 February 2024

Junior King's, Canterbury

Milner Court

Canterbury

CT2 0AY

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors are vigilant to ensure that pupil wellbeing is at the centre of everyone's work. For example, by undertaking detailed audits of safeguarding and health and safety provision. Governors maintain the separate identity of Junior King's whilst its leadership benefits from sharing policies and resources as a result of belonging to a larger organisation. Leaders have created an inclusive community where pupils feel safe to speak up to express concerns or challenge and explore their own opinions and those of others. Groups have been set up to support these discussions which helps pupils to be involved, valued and welcomed.
2. Leaders have introduced a cross-curricular approach across subjects such as humanities, religious education (RE), design technology (DT) and art. Teachers plan in an imaginative way through a series of connected topics. This approach, which encourages links to be found in real-world evidence, stimulates pupils' interest and motivation, improving their thinking skills and promoting their learning.
3. In the early years, leaders' and teachers' good-quality care and secure knowledge of the curriculum enable children to enjoy school and make good progress in all areas of learning. Leaders evaluate practice within the setting and ensure that planning reflects the children's interests. Consequently, all groups of children build upon strong foundations and thrive.
4. Leaders have implemented a life skills programme to support pupils' personal development. However, the quality of teaching of relationships and sex education (RSE) within this programme is inconsistent; the time spent on teaching some aspects is too limited. As a result, pupils' understanding of some topics is less secure.
5. A varied and effective programme to develop pupils' physical, mental and emotional wellbeing is established. Assemblies and life skills lessons promote the importance of physical and mental health and happiness. Pupils choose enrichment activities with care, reflecting how best to increase their self-confidence and learn new skills. Teachers monitor participation in the wide range of activities, including extensive physical education (PE) opportunities and regularly review what is on offer.
6. Pupils and staff understand that kindness is central to the culture of the school and pupils' positivity reflects this. Incidents of bullying and unkind behaviour are rare, when they do occur thorough action is taken. Communication with parents is clear and there is suitably individualised support provided for pupils.
7. Day and boarding pupils are appropriately supervised. Boarding staff know pupils well and develop positive and supportive relationships, which results in pupils feeling valued. This promotes their wellbeing.
8. The welfare, health and safety of pupils are actively promoted. Leaders are responsive to any concerns or potential issues and take prompt action when these are identified. This approach, combined with robust policies, systematic recording, and strong governors' oversight supports pupils' welfare effectively. The school's premises and accommodation are very well maintained.

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:

- strengthen pupils' understanding of RSE by ensuring that teaching of RSE covers all topics in the curriculum consistently.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

9. Oversight provided by the governing body, such as having robust systems to check policies and careful recruitment of staff into key positions, ensures that those with leadership and management responsibilities have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles effectively. Governors evaluate the impact of school improvement plans, drawing on their experience of pupil wellbeing, teaching and learning and health and safety.
10. The school combines tradition with a modern outlook, the local with the international and academic rigour which meets the needs of different groups of pupils. Leaders use detailed tracking systems to carefully monitor pupils' progress, identifying any underperformance and providing rapid additional support. Leaders have clear pastoral structures in place through the house system. This complements the broad academic programme, ensuring that the aims of the school to nurture individual talents and interests are understood by all, and that pupils' wellbeing is actively monitored.
11. Leaders promote the wellbeing of boarders and ensure their welfare needs are met. Boarding house staff work as a cohesive team, creating a nurturing environment ensuring that pupils are well looked after, secure and happy. Caring and committed staff take time to listen to pupils and encourage them to speak out if they are worried.
12. In the early years, leaders' proficient planning, combined with staff knowledge of the needs and interests of the children, creates a welcoming environment that promotes children's development. There are abundant opportunities for children to make progress through play. Their language and number skills are highly developed, and they apply their understanding to a range of well-planned activities. There are clear strategies to develop concepts of fairness and working together. Consequently, children are engaged in their learning, make good progress and build strong relationships.
13. Risk management is a key element in leaders' planning and is effectively overseen by a governors' risk committee, who carry out a thorough audit of the risk register. Leaders prioritise regular staff training to manage risk and ensure that pupil welfare is kept at the centre of all that the school does. A recent review of site safety confirmed that staff had considered relevant risks.
14. Leaders have improved access to the school for all groups of pupils, for example, through improvements to boarding facilities to ensure high-quality, accessible provision and digitalising the school hymn book to enable enlarged print.
15. Leaders are aware of the requirements to contact external agencies when necessary. They make use of the available support, developing effective working relationships with a range of specialists.
16. Relevant information is provided for parents so that they are aware of the school's policies and practice. Parents receive information about their child's progress through meetings and written reports. Leaders respond promptly to any complaints or concerns and record details thoroughly. Clear processes are followed with lessons learnt and changes to procedures made where appropriate.

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

17. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

18. Leaders plan a stimulating and broad curriculum which is complemented by a wide range of extra-curricular activities, visiting speakers and excursions. The curriculum is appropriate to the pupils' ages, aptitudes and needs, and enables pupils to flourish and make good progress.
19. Leaders prioritise developing teachers' skills in delivering well-planned lessons, matched to the pupils' identified needs. There is extensive support for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to ensure they make good progress, including structuring of tasks in lessons and progress review meetings.
20. Skilled teachers provide imaginative ways to engage and sustain pupils' interest in their learning. Lessons are well-structured, often starting with an activity that stimulates participation. For example, a Year 2 maths lesson on shape began with the teacher 'spilling' the contents of her shopping bag. Pupils were immediately engaged in sorting the different containers into appropriate groups, according to their properties. Teachers' effective questioning probes pupils' understanding and teases out any misconceptions. These strategies, which are consistently embedded across all age groups, promote new learning while developing independence, collaboration and confidence.
21. Leaders adapt the curriculum so that it is appropriate for pupils with varying needs. Support staff skilfully individualise planning to ensure that pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive effective help to develop their speaking and language skills.
22. Teachers use the information from a systematic assessment framework to inform their schemes of work and lesson-planning. Pupils respond effectively to the constructive feedback provided. Pupils are encouraged to think and learn for themselves through the consistent use of memory checklists before seeking help from a teacher.
23. The well-planned linguistic, literacy and numeracy curriculum is complemented by an integrated, thematic approach to the teaching of humanities and other subjects. This approach enables pupils to acquire knowledge whilst developing a wider worldview.
24. Teachers in the early years implement a tailored curriculum around the interests of the children, through creating well-crafted learning stories. These are incorporated across all the areas of learning which help to excite and engage the children, who make good progress from their starting points. Children enthusiastically prepared for a 'party', carefully making decorations and writing invitations. Teachers and assistants actively encourage children to engage in dialogue, resulting in confident speakers who communicate their thoughts and needs well.
25. There is a rich provision of extra-curricular activities, which extends the skills of pupils while providing inclusive opportunities to take part. For example, the art extension club provides planned and appropriate challenge for young artists and potential scholars to develop their printing skills. Clubs are offered which include physical, creative and technological topics. These clubs foster fun, involvement and participation. There is a high level of uptake. Many high-quality musical activities provide further opportunities to develop skills.

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

26. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

27. Pupils are encouraged to show mutual respect and make good choices through a reward system that recognises kindness and honesty, as well as academic and sporting prowess. Leaders aim for pupils to be heard; this informs decisions concerning pupil welfare and mental health. A life skills programme covers aspects of pupils' personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education. It is delivered by teachers who know the pupils well, enabling them to discuss a range of potentially sensitive issues with confidence.
28. Many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their self-esteem and self-confidence. High-quality teaching across the curriculum promotes social interaction. Pupils concentrate and collaborate well. Staff offer intervention programmes, tailored to individual need, to pupils who benefit from further support.
29. Leaders plan integrated opportunities to develop the pupils' moral and spiritual knowledge and understanding throughout the school day. For example, a morning activity during Lent involves pupils picking a daily act of kindness. Assemblies in the local church provide a time of spiritual reflection for pupils, irrespective of their beliefs.
30. The school's RSE curriculum enables most pupils to develop understanding of the benefits of healthy relationships to their mental wellbeing and self-respect. Nurses skilfully deliver sessions on some topics, such as changes during puberty. However, some staff are not sufficiently confident in delivering some aspects of RSE, resulting in varying delivery throughout the school. As a result, the quality of pupils' learning in this curriculum area is inconsistent.
31. Pupils develop a strong understanding of how to stay physically healthy through a varied physical education programme, life-skills curriculum and extra-curricular activities. There is a high level of participation in the many opportunities afforded to pupils to engage in sport, with an emphasis on healthy competition and fair play.
32. Leaders foster an environment that celebrates kindness. Leaders monitor behaviour and adopt appropriate strategies to manage any negative behaviour when necessary. Most pupils are respectful and considerate of others. Any incidents of unkind behaviour are quickly identified and dealt with. Pupils are knowledgeable about the harm that bullying causes; they know that the school does not tolerate bullying.
33. Pupils across different years develop their leadership skills and are encouraged to make suggestions to improve the school environment. They feel a sense of achievement when one of their suggestions is taken forward; for example, setting up the 'Zen Zone' space to relax and receive support.
34. Skilled staff know children in the early years well and are able to support their differing needs, helping them to manage their own emotions and build the skills to form positive relationships. Children in the early years start their day with enthusiasm, looking forward to the range of activities that are carefully planned to develop their physical skills and build resilience, such as climbing the obstacle course or baking a cake.

35. A robust system of recording admission and attendance is maintained and overseen by leaders. Staff follow up on any concerns about absence and they track pupils before they join and after they leave the school.
36. The school site is carefully monitored and supervised throughout the day. Systems for recording accidents, illnesses and the administration of medicines are robust. Leaders ensure that the boarding and day medical centres have caring staff who are appropriately trained to deal with both physical and mental health conditions. Leaders have adopted a thorough approach to verify that systems are in place to promote safety. The school site is well maintained. Boarding accommodation is comfortable and all aspects of fire management, including effective training, are in place. Pupils say that they feel safe. The catering department works closely with the pastoral and other teams to ensure that diets are balanced. The food provision is varied, nutritious and of high quality.

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

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

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

38. The well-planned social education programme, which includes a series of speakers, reinforces pupils' learning about the wider world with examples which are both memorable and meaningful for pupils. A recent visitor encouraged pupils to develop resilience and persevere when things are difficult by recounting overcoming a challenge.
39. Teachers encourage pupils to be proud of their individuality, while being part of a community. Opportunities to celebrate occasions, such as International Women's Day, are welcomed. Careful consideration is given to ideas that would help raise the pupils' awareness of, and respect for, other cultures, such as the introduction of 'meat-free Mondays'. Pupils engage with the local and wider community. Pupils are aware of the impact of small acts; for example, donating shoes. Younger pupils take great care making 'pocket hugs' to send to a charity.
40. Leaders develop pupils' understanding of diversity, equality, and inclusion. A FREDIE (fairness, respect, equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement) group has been set up to enable pupils to have an input into promoting inclusion. Curriculum resources are chosen carefully to promote pupils' understanding. For example, older pupils discuss the topic of physical disability sensitively with staff after watching a film. A recent theatre production encouraged pupils to look at issues that have shaped Britain, including religious intolerance and the effect of cyberbullying on young people today.
41. Economic education is integrated within several subjects. During life skills lessons, pupils learn practical money management and older pupils work as a team to create budgets and 'pitch' for a stall to raise money at the school fete. The humanities curriculum is carefully planned to develop pupils' understanding of social, cultural, and economic education. Year 7 pupils considered the impact of taking a job in different geographical locations, taking into account financial implications alongside animal conservation, earth history as well as marine biology.
42. Leaders welcome freedom of expression while pupils are taught to accept responsibility for their words and actions. Pupils participate appropriately in decision-making processes through which they are taught about the democratic process. Early years children agree with the results of a daily vote as to which book will be read, articulating that this is a fair way to decide. The school council holds elections to choose how to improve the community. A display in the main school building enables visitors to see what the council has achieved.
43. Well-planned careers provision starts in the early years with a 'when I grow up' topic. Older pupils use an online programme to investigate their interests, discovering how these may feed into a career. In life skills lessons, as part of a yearly topic on dreams and goals, pupils are encouraged to think about their strengths and how to overcome challenges. Year 7 pupils were animated in a discussion about the skills that workers may need to be successful over the next 20 years in a changing employment market.

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

44. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

45. The positive safeguarding culture is embedded in the school. Staff understand their roles because they are well trained. Leaders have a secure understanding of the requirements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils. Leaders work effectively with external agencies to support pupils where there are any safeguarding concerns and, where needed, put in place appropriate support. Leaders make good use of external resources to enhance their work and to provide training for staff and governors.
46. Governors are committed to keeping pupils safe from harm. There are clear processes to check that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with pupils. Governors and leaders are diligent in their duty of checking the record of appointments. Staff with responsibility for recruitment have a secure understanding of the relevant checks required and make effective use of an online system to support this process.
47. There are robust systems to record, monitor and assess safeguarding in the school. These provide a consistent approach and enable the designated safeguarding lead (DSL), and team of deputies, to review any incidents or concern. Incidents or concerns are dealt with effectively. Pupils, parents and staff have confidence that issues will be addressed, and interventions put in place to minimise risk and mitigate problems. The strength of relationships between staff and pupils helps pupils feel confident to share any worries they have.
48. Leaders have also put in place a number of ways in which pupils can share concerns. Early years children are taught that if the 'sea is too stormy' they find the lifeboat team, which is made up of teachers and assistants from their class.
49. Pupils are aware of how to stay safe online through teaching, posters and frequent open discussions, enabling them to use technology respectfully and responsibly. Suitable filtering and monitoring systems are in place, which the DSL regularly checks, following up any inappropriate use.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	Junior King's School
Department for Education number	866/6061
Registered charity number	307942
Address	Junior King's School Milner Court Sturry Kent CT2 0AY
Phone number	01227 714000
Email address	office@junior-kings.co.uk
Website	www.junior-kings.co.uk
Proprietor	Canterbury Cathedral Foundation
Chair	Count Benoit de Vitry d'Avaucourt
Headteacher	Mrs Emma Károlyi
Age range	3 to 13
Number of pupils	363
Number of boarding pupils	67
Date of previous inspection	15 to 16 January 2020

Information about the school

51. Junior King's School is a co-educational day and boarding school. Founded in 1879, it moved to its current location in Sturry, Kent in 1929. The school is owned by Canterbury Cathedral Foundation and governed by a board which also oversees The King's School, Canterbury. Since the previous inspection a new chair of governors was appointed in 2022.
52. There are two boarding houses, for pupils from Year 4 to 8. One is for female pupils and one for male pupils with both houses located within the main building.
53. There are 29 children in the early years comprising one Nursery and one Reception class.
54. The school has identified 40 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
55. English is an additional language for 33 pupils.
56. The school states its aims are to be inclusive, kind, and caring, and through a creative, skills-based education, encourage all pupils to reach their potential and to develop their physical, mental, social, spiritual, cultural, and intellectual life. It seeks to nurture individual talents and interests, fostering a love of learning so that pupils move on as respectful and resilient, well prepared for the future.

Inspection details

Inspection dates

27 to 29 February

57. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

58. 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 a group of 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.

59. 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

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