



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**THE KING'S SCHOOL**



# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## The King's School

Full Name of School	<b>The King's School</b>
DfE Number	<b>896/6019</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>525934</b>
Address	<b>The King's School Wrexham Road Chester Cheshire CH4 7QL</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01244 689500</b>
Fax Number	<b>01244 689501</b>
Email Address	<b>hm@kingschester.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Christopher Ramsey</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Cllr Mrs Eleanor Johnson</b>
Age Range	<b>7 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>988</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (656 boys; 332 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	7-11: <b>243</b> 11-18: <b>745</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>988</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>10 to 13 February 2015</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the governors, observed a sample of the co-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mr John Aguilar	Team Inspector (Principal, Society of Heads school)
Miss Eleni Conidaris	Team Inspector (Head of lower school, HMC school)
Mr Thomas Garnier	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Sharon Gleed-Smith	Team Inspector (Assistant head, academy school)
Mrs Linda Hamilton	Team Inspector (Head of junior school, HMC school)
Mr Nicholas Hopton	Team Inspector (Head of department, HMC school)
Mr Christopher King	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Jane Prescott	Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mr John Sykes	Team Inspector (Director of studies, HMC school)

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(b) Action points</b>	<b>4</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	4
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	4
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	5
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	6
(c) The contribution of teaching	8
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	10
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	11
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	13
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
(a) The quality of governance	14
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	14

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Founded in 1541, The King's School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from seven to eighteen. The junior school was established in 1911. Girls first entered the sixth form in 1998 and the school became co-educational throughout in 2008. It moved from its original site in the Chester Cathedral precincts to its current location on the outskirts of the city in 1960. It retains and places importance on its close links with the cathedral. The school's governing body includes the Bishop of Chester, the Dean and nominees of the cathedral, nominees from universities and local charities.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a first-class education and the pursuit of unpretentious excellence. It sets out to provide an innovative education that is a transformative experience, harnessing and enriching the full potential of all its pupils so that they develop self-confidence and a desire to serve the wider community. It encourages ambition, benevolence and co-operation as core values. The school places emphasis on its Christian heritage and foundation while welcoming pupils of any faith or none.
- 1.3 There are currently 988 pupils enrolled at the school, 332 girls and 656 boys. There are 243 pupils in the junior school and 218 in the sixth form. Most pupils from the junior school progress into the senior school, together with others coming from local primary schools. Pupils are mainly of White British origin and come from within a 50-mile radius of the school. Virtually all pupils are of at least above average ability, with 104 identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom 25 require extra help from the learning support department. There is one pupil with a statement of special educational needs. There are 18 pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), all of whom speak English fluently.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection the school day for both sections of the school has been restructured and examinations in the International GCSE (IGCSE) introduced for a number of subjects. Drama is now an option at GCSE and A level. The senior management structure has been clarified and a performance management system for teaching staff has been introduced. The school has rebuilt the sixth-form centre, created a performing arts centre, refurbished laboratories and improved classroom accommodation in several areas. A new junior school learning centre was completed early in 2015 and the school is in the process of establishing an infant school to take pupils aged five to seven, due to open in September 2015.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following tables.

### ***Junior School***

School	NC name
J1	Year 3
J2	Year 4
J3	Year 5
J4	Year 6

### ***Senior School***

School	NC name
Remove	Year 7
Shell	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The King's School provides an excellent education, providing pupils with a rich and transformative experience that nurtures the development of their full potential. The curriculum is excellent and suitable for all pupils, including those with SEND and those who are particularly able. Pupils throughout the school are highly articulate. They read and speak with fluency, using a sophisticated vocabulary. They manipulate numbers and discuss scientific concepts confidently. They routinely use information and communication technology (ICT) skilfully in their work. Pupils participate enthusiastically in the many opportunities available for physical exercise. Their imagination and creative skills are evident in their art, drama and music making. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires demonstrated how highly pupils and parents value the range of subjects and co-curricular opportunities available to them. Well-planned, often inspirational teaching ensures that pupils of all abilities make good progress, although senior school teaching does not always make full use of the strategies identified in the individual education plans for pupils with SEND.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors and new pupils. The relationships between staff and pupils, whether in the junior or the senior school, are good, invariably characterised by mutual respect. In questionnaire responses a minority of pupils said that they do not feel that senior leaders are concerned for them as individuals. Inspectors found that staff, especially in the junior school, know pupils well and are determined to help them succeed. In interviews, pupils said that they receive high-quality guidance about future choices. The pupils are eager to offer help and enjoy undertaking responsibilities. The behaviour of pupils of all ages is mainly excellent, with tolerance, empathy and friendly respect evident. Inspectors found little evidence of bullying amongst pupils although a small minority of senior school pupils indicated that they did not feel that the school was effective in dealing with this area. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy and has conducted surveys in order to gain an accurate picture of such concerns. School logs are accurately maintained and show that all matters raised are fully pursued with the aim of achieving resolution. Safeguarding procedures are excellent. Health and safety procedures, including those for managing the risk of fire, are very thorough and ensure that the premises are safe from avoidable hazards. There is a suitable plan to improve access for the disabled.
- 2.3 Governors are strongly committed to the school. They show an excellent understanding of their responsibilities, including for safeguarding. They are very well informed and have a clear vision for the school's future. Good senior leadership provides a clear and ambitious educational direction and middle management in the senior school has improved since the previous inspection, with heads of department actively monitoring the work of their colleagues and working together to share the most effective practice. Teachers are qualified, experienced and trained in all the relevant aspects of school policy. The majority of parents express very high levels of satisfaction with the school, although a few say that their concerns are not handled promptly or well. Inspectors judged that the complaints policy is appropriate and correctly implemented. Pupils are clearly proud to be part of the school and trust it to help them achieve their ambitions.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Develop pastoral systems that are more effective in demonstrating to pupils that they are known and valued as individuals by the school leadership.
2. Ensure that there is thorough implementation and monitoring of strategies suggested in individual education plans for senior school pupils with SEND.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and extra-curricular achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is highly successful in meeting its aim to provide a first-class education with an emphasis on excellence, so that all pupils can develop and fulfil their potential. Pupils throughout the school are notably articulate in conversation and read aloud fluently and with expression. They have an excellent vocabulary, expressing themselves with increasing sophistication and arguing cogently as they mature. They show excellent ability in manipulating numbers and use ICT with great confidence in and out of lessons. The high quality of the art work on display throughout the school, in which pupils use a range of media including computer manipulation, is evidence of their creativity, as is the zest with which they work to achieve high-quality musical and dramatic productions.

#### ***Junior school***

- 3.3 Junior school pupils reach high levels of achievement. They have been very successful in numerous competitions, academic, sporting and creative. Pupils were finalists in a national mathematics competition and county chess competitions. The junior school swimmers reached the finals of a national schools swimming gala. Sports teams achieve regular success in competitions and many pupils represent the county in a range of sports. They achieve highly in environmental challenges, such as the 'Chester in Bloom' contest and regularly win in local performing arts festivals. Many pupils are successful in speech and drama examinations, with some auditioning for Theatr Clwyd. A number of pupils are cathedral choristers and in 2014 pupils won the Chester 'Spirit of Christmas' competition .
- 3.4 The school uses a standardised diagnostic test when pupils enter and thereafter monitors pupils' progress by means of routine testing and grading. Observation of lessons and of their written work shows that all pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, make excellent progress and attain at a high level throughout their time in the junior school. Many go on to achieve scholarships for entry to senior schools. This is partly due to their excellent attitude to work, which is characterised by a bubbling enthusiasm for learning.

#### ***Senior school***

- 3.5 Senior school pupils also achieve considerable success beyond the classroom, including in mathematics, physics, biology, linguistic and chess Olympiads. Pupils have won places in the National Youth Orchestra, as choristers in the cathedral, and some have achieved diploma status by the time they leave the school. A school team won the Model United Nations (MUN) debating competition in 2013. Arkwright scholarships have been awarded to pupils in each of the last six years. Pupils compete in a range of sports at county, national and international levels, with especially high standards being reached in rowing. Large numbers of pupils embark on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award at all levels, with a significant number of bronze, silver and gold awards being received in 2014. Design and technology (DT) pupils recently reached the finals of the national Design Ventura 2015 competition and won sponsorship for the F1 in Schools challenge.

- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been well above the national average for maintained schools and similar to the average for maintained selective schools. In 2014 three-quarters of the overall results were graded A or A\*. Results in IGCSE mathematics and sciences have been higher than worldwide averages. A-level results have been well above the national average for maintained selective schools and in 2014 almost nine out of ten results were graded A\* to B.
- 3.7 In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost all pupils and their parents expressed great satisfaction with pupils' progress. In interview, pupils were also confident in asserting that they know that they are making good progress. Observation of their performance in lessons and written work shows that all pupils, including those with SEND and those identified as the most able, make progress and achieve in line with their potential. Virtually all the pupils go on to higher education, with three-quarters of leavers taking up places on demanding courses at universities with rigorous entrance requirements.
- 3.8 Pupils' excellent attitude to work supports their swift progress. They have high aspirations, many telling inspectors that they chose the school because of its academic record. They usually settle quickly in lessons, ask perceptive and challenging questions and show genuine intellectual curiosity. They have an excellent work ethic, studying with tenacity and perseverance. Pupils are notably skilled in working co-operatively, helping each other to deepen their understanding of complex concepts.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The curriculum is extensive, so that the school is highly successful in meeting its aims to harness and enrich the full potential of all its pupils. The curriculum is suitable for the age range and ability of the pupils and covers more than the requisite areas of learning. Both in the junior and the senior school, the programme of personal and social education (PSE) ensures that fundamental British values such as democracy, the rule of law, tolerance and mutual respect are actively promoted. The curriculum is supported by a comprehensive range of academic extension and enrichment activities. An extensive co-curricular programme provides genuine opportunities for pupils to challenge themselves and responses to questionnaires were highly appreciative of the range of opportunities available.

#### ***Junior school***

- 3.11 The junior school curriculum is stimulating and well planned. There are strong cross-curricular links that enrich and enhance the pupils' education. Excellent resources and facilities contribute to a rewarding and enjoyable learning experience that helps pupils to fulfil their potential. The school emphasises the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills. The appealing new library, which is supervised effectively by committed Year 6 pupils, and activities such as numerous author visits, inspire pupils' love of reading.
- 3.12 The school has reinforced its systems to identify and support pupils with SEND, and individual education plans are created for such pupils. These support classroom teaching effectively. Pupils also receive tailored support through additional

specialists. High levels of challenge ensure that the more able pupils are appropriately stretched.

- 3.13 An excellent range of co-curricular activities enhances the junior school curriculum. Courses in Mandarin and computer programming and activities such as baking, dance and Lego technology are popular. Pupils also benefit from the rich provision of theatrical, musical and sporting activities. Junior school pupils speak enthusiastically of their experiences on the many day and residential visits. These have included trips to the National Water Sports Centre in Wales, Theatre Clwyd and the ski slopes of the French Alps.
- 3.14 Links with the local and wider community are effective and include sporting fixtures against local schools, participation in cultural events such as the Chester Festival and strong connections with Chester cathedral.

### ***Senior school***

- 3.15 The senior school curriculum is grounded in an academic tradition with a strong emphasis on mathematics and science. It extends beyond the National Curriculum to allow for a combination of breadth and specialisation, successfully stimulating, challenging and supporting pupils, including the most able. The provision for pupils identified with SEND has been extended since the previous inspection. The learning support department creates useful individual education plans and provides resources for staff to support them in their classroom practice. Utilising this extended provision is in its early stages and is not yet fully effective. There are good individual education plans in place which suggest ways in which pupils could be helped to achieve better or more easily. Arrangements for monitoring their effectiveness are not fully developed and within lessons there is not always enough matching of work to needs.
- 3.16 In the first three years of the senior school pupils follow a broad curriculum including three modern foreign languages, Latin, classical civilisation and separate science subjects. At GCSE pupils study ten subjects, with a compulsory core of subjects including English literature, mathematics, at least one modern foreign language and two sciences. In the sixth form, pupils currently choose from 24 subjects. They may also pursue further courses such as the extended project qualification (EPQ), for which the provision is excellent.
- 3.17 High-quality careers information enables pupils to make informed choices at each stage of their education. This begins formally in Year 8 and continues throughout the senior school. In Year 11 pupils are offered the opportunity of taking a series of tests which help to identify their strengths and aptitudes and offers suggestions for suitable careers. Sixth-form pupils in interviews spoke highly of the advice and support provided as they consider university choices.
- 3.18 There is a compulsory games afternoon and, for all except Year 10 pupils, one afternoon per fortnight of enrichment activities. This innovative programme, which provides for academic, creative, community-based and skills-based activities, successfully extends the classroom curriculum. It encourages pupils to develop their higher order thinking skills and independence as well as giving them the opportunity to make a difference through community service activities, such as sixth-form pupils teaching in local primary schools or visiting care homes to talk to residents.
- 3.19 Pupils benefit greatly from an extensive co-curricular programme with more than 150 options on offer encompassing sport, the arts, practical activity and community

service. Sports figure strongly with a wide choice of competitive team and individual sports. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the Combined Cadet Corps are popular options. Understanding of political and global issues is reflected in societies such as the Amnesty International group, a 'Society against sexism', and a model House of Commons. Academic interests can be further pursued in debating, philosophy, chess or poetry clubs. Music and drama are well provided for, with numerous choirs and ensembles and pupils participating in or producing regular theatrical performances.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.20 The contribution of teaching throughout the school is excellent.
- 3.21 Teaching successfully supports the school's aims to provide first-class education and the pursuit of excellence. Throughout the school, teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. Their passion for their subjects results in enthusiastic, stimulating lessons. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses and in interviews, the overwhelming majority of the pupils said that their teachers were inspirational and stimulating. Lessons observed by inspectors were frequently excellent, with lively pace and a stimulating range of activities, resulting in high levels of enjoyment and rapid progress by pupils.

#### ***Junior school***

- 3.22 In the junior school the teaching is most effective in providing well-planned and stimulating lessons. Teaching demonstrates a strong awareness of pupils' needs and confident use of the strategies suggested to support pupils identified with SEND. Astute questioning and the setting of appropriate tasks ensure that the more able pupils are encouraged to stretch their understanding further, as in a Year 3 art lesson in which there was constant assessment of pupils' understanding resulting in valuable advice to support improvement. Marking is of a consistently high standard, with pupils encouraged to initial the teacher's comments to indicate that they have read and understood them.
- 3.23 The teaching employs a range of strategies to engage pupils' interest and to involve them in improving their own work and that of others. For example in a Year 6 English lesson, pupils enthusiastically gave suggestions of more sophisticated vocabulary to improve sentences. Teaching makes highly effective use of the excellent resources, including the well-equipped science and DT facilities. Teaching is almost always characterised by a lively, engaging manner which successfully combines good pace with firm, cheerful control of exuberance. There were a few occasions observed when this control slipped, with a consequent loss of impetus and focus in the class. Teaching encourages pupils to be enthusiastic and excited by their learning, to ask pertinent and observant questions and to take great pride in the presentation of their work.
- 3.24 Teachers have high expectations and establish a supportive, stimulating learning atmosphere in which pupils are encouraged to embark on new challenges with an expectation that this will be fun and that they can succeed.

#### ***Senior school***

- 3.25 In the senior school, teaching is extremely effective in enabling pupils of all ages and abilities to make swift progress and to develop a secure understanding of their subjects. Lessons are very well planned and suitable for the age, interests and

abilities of the pupils. Although the specific needs of the pupils identified with SEND are not always fully recognised, lessons enable them to make equally good progress.

- 3.26 Marking throughout the school is regularly undertaken and much is detailed, with the best offering helpful comments with analysis of weaknesses and strategies to improve. This is an improvement from the time of the previous inspection. A characteristic of many lessons is the use of marking by pupils, followed by encouragement to review their performances individually and collaboratively. The overall consistency of marking has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils say that they know how they are progressing because teachers discuss their work with them in and out of class, something which they very much appreciate.
- 3.27 Teaching demonstrates excellent subject knowledge, with lessons encouraging interest, very good pace and challenge for pupils. In an innovative Year 7 geography lesson, pupils made rapid progress in understanding the migratory changes which have created the diverse demography of the United Kingdom. An A-level English lesson touched on the works of Chaucer, Shakespeare and Austen as well as providing close analysis of the Georgian play under discussion at the time. Teaching across the curriculum makes highly effective use of ICT to motivate the pupils and to facilitate learning. It encourages pupils to use their own electronic devices responsibly, although on occasion pupils do not live up to their teachers' expectations in this respect. In a very small number of lessons seen, pupils' progress was limited either by the pace being too slow or by insecure classroom control. Teachers establish excellent relationships so that learning is seen as a co-operative venture. They have high expectations of their pupils and offer much help and encouragement. Independent learning is strongly promoted and teachers frequently encourage pupils to reflect and expand on their ideas.
- 3.28 Planning documentation shows an awareness of pupils identified with SEND and in some lessons imaginative use of different tasks was seen which provided very well for their needs. The implementation of such strategies is not a consistent feature of all lessons despite clear identification of those pupils who would benefit from them. The more able pupils are suitably challenged by the lesson content and sometimes by the use of carefully structured groups which allow such pupils to work together. In response to the recommendations of the previous inspection, there has been considerable focus in the senior school on teaching and learning methods. A learning and teaching committee, involving staff with a wide range of experience, is helping to stimulate discussion and disseminate the most effective practice across all subject areas, to the benefit of pupils.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The high quality of pupils' personal development throughout the school fully reflects the school's aim to provide a transformative experience where each pupil can develop self-confidence and a desire to serve the wider community.

#### ***Junior school***

- 4.3 Junior school pupils are notably self-assured and poised. They listen to each other well and respect others' viewpoints. They are tolerant and their responses in religious studies and PSE lessons show their growing understanding of different faiths. They are able to discuss their own strengths and those of their peers, complimenting each other readily. Their colourful art work and lively enjoyment of music-making are testament to their aesthetic sense and mature awareness of beauty.
- 4.4 The pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong. They realise that poor behaviour has consequences, not just on a personal but also on a community level. In an excellent assembly attended by inspectors, pupils led their peers into considering the importance of kindness, demonstrating how it had been lived out in the school during its 'Random Acts of Kindness' week. Friendly relationships are evident throughout, including during meal times. Pupils demonstrate a high level of care for the environment, discussing such issues as deforestation and global warming, and feeling a duty to take action, even in such simple acts as making sure that lights are switched off.
- 4.5 Pupils take great pride in their positions of responsibility and charity work. Positions of responsibility are undertaken seriously by the pupils, for example in acting as 'buddies' to new pupils, as prefects and as school council representatives. They are proud of their work for charities, enthusiastically raising money for causes such as Guide Dogs for the Blind and show a keen awareness that there are many others less fortunate than themselves.
- 4.6 Pupils' understanding of Western cultural traditions is good and they spoke intelligently about days devoted to helping them understand other cultures, drawing on the insights of their peers from ethnic minorities. Their awareness of global inequalities is evident in their support of Fairtrade.
- 4.7 Pupils greet and talk to visitors enthusiastically, demonstrating great pride in their school and looking forward eagerly to progressing to the senior school.

#### ***Senior school***

- 4.8 Pupils show a highly developed awareness of non-material aspects of existence. Their understanding of the Christian ethos of the school is bolstered by attendance at termly services in the cathedral. The school has included an aim to increase awareness of its Christian heritage in order to help pupils to have a broader understanding of ethos. Pupils do reflect on their own beliefs and those of others, for example during an assembly in which they shared their own poetry about significant life events. They also demonstrate considerable emotional maturity for their age. Their appreciation of beauty is reflected in their excellent artwork. They show much

enjoyment in music-making and respond sensitively to performances by their peers. Pupils respond well when challenged to discuss such matters as whether God can be said to become directly involved in human affairs.

- 4.9 The moral development of pupils is excellent. Behaviour is almost invariably excellent. Pupils listen to each other and to their teachers courteously, challenging different ideas with appropriate respect. Pupils are quick to celebrate and admire the achievements of others. They show good general knowledge when discussing moral and ethical matters, such as the morality of euthanasia for the terminally ill or whether it is ever right for a government to act without people's consent.
- 4.10 Senior school pupils willingly take up a range of responsibilities. Pupils have a strong social conscience, with form charity representatives helping to organise fund raising. All sixth-form pupils are given a specific role of responsibility, including mentoring new pupils as they join the school. Pupils readily volunteer to help others, in school and in the wider community. Older pupils benefit from the community service opportunities in the enrichment programme, such as helping with Riding for the Disabled. They show a keen understanding of legal and political systems as well as of the British values encapsulated in such general principles as tolerance and democracy; sixth-form pupils talked thoughtfully about their duty to participate in the forthcoming general election. Across all stages of the school, pupils are actively encouraged to engage in decision making through the democratic process, such as representation within the school councils.
- 4.11 Pupils show strong cultural knowledge, appreciation and understanding of Western and other cultures, for example South American musical traditions. Their appreciation of different cultures is further enhanced by visits to museums and galleries as well as by trips overseas.
- 4.12 By the time they finish the sixth form, pupils have matured into confident, well-informed and socially aware individuals, well prepared for the challenges of adult life.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is good.
- 4.14 Pastoral care is better in the junior school than in the senior school. The school meets its aim of actively supporting pupils in the pursuit of excellent academic work across both junior and senior schools.

##### ***Junior school***

- 4.15 The teachers know their pupils exceptionally well and relationships are excellent. Their close understanding of their pupils ensures that they provide excellent support and guidance, making pupils feel safe and that they are cared for well. There are mutually respectful relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils and their peers. Many pupils commented on the kindness of their teachers and friends.
- 4.16 In the junior school new pupils are quickly made to feel included, aided by thorough induction procedures that oversee the welfare of the new pupils. The pupils are orderly and most courteous, respecting school expectations of their behaviour. They reported in interviews that any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

**Senior school**

- 4.17 In the senior school relationships between staff and pupils are good and the school has effective structures to oversee pupils' academic progress. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses and in interviews, several pupils felt that the school did not always address their concerns; however inspectors felt that the school had an effective complaints policy and responded carefully to pupil issues, but that a firm line was taken on issues relating to published rules and policy. Inspectors also found that the majority of interactions are warm, encouraging and show real interest in pupils: logs and records show that the school acts on all matters which are formally raised and is proactive in trying to find ways to understand any particular concerns or trends.
- 4.18 New Year 7 pupils settle quickly, thanks to the time taken by staff to ensure an excellent, smooth transition. This is enabled in a number of ways, for example by a residential trip in the preceding summer holidays. At other entry points pupils are warmly welcomed and soon settle into the school. Senior pupils write to their mentees to welcome them and support them on arrival.
- 4.19 There is a detailed policy which actively promotes good behaviour and this is implemented with varying degrees of success. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils and a few parents said that the school does not always handle incidents of alleged bullying sufficiently well. In conversation with inspectors, pupils confirm that they know that the school views bullying as unacceptable. Inspection finds that a clear policy is in place. The logs for bullying incidents show that the school takes clear action when issues are raised and has made arrangements, through surveys for example, to understand underlying themes and trends in this area. A recent anti-bullying survey had already alerted the school to senior pupils' concerns. There is a strong focus on academic achievement in the school and this has sometimes created a tension where more sensitive and personal issues are concerned. The school had already invited pupils to join working groups to improve the implementation of anti-bullying measures.

**Whole school**

- 4.20 Pupils in both the junior and senior schools are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. The appetising meals provided at lunchtime include plentiful fresh fruit and vegetables. The strong emphasis on sport facilitates regular exercise, in which pupils energetically participate.
- 4.21 The school has a suitable accessibility plan which is implemented very well to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs.
- 4.22 In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses a minority of pupils felt that the school does not always seek their views on issues which may affect them. However, inspectors found that throughout the school there are a variety of effective measures for seeking the views of pupils and responding to them. These range from 'worry boxes' for juniors and questionnaires at the end of PSE topics for seniors to the school nurse supplying feedback forms for visitors to the medical room. The school councils meet very regularly and have been effective in bringing about improvements, for example providing a gazebo for sheltered outdoor reading in the junior school and the installation of more water fountains in the senior school.

**4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.23 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety throughout the school is excellent.
- 4.24 The school has thorough arrangements in place to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. Senior members of staff have designated responsibility for safeguarding. They are trained as required and swift to take action should there be a need to do so. Good relationships have been created with outside agencies and a strong system for reporting and responding to concerns is in place. Information is shared within school appropriately and stored securely. There is a designated governor responsible for overseeing child protection. All staff, governors and volunteers are trained in safeguarding procedures on joining the school and at suitable intervals thereafter
- 4.25 The school has produced comprehensive policies covering all aspects of health and safety, including risks presented by fire and other hazards. There are regular fire drills and staff receive appropriate fire awareness training. Exhaustive, well-tailored risk assessments are carried out for all relevant on- and off-site activities. Suitable arrangements promote pupils' safety on site. These include clear signage and appropriate supervision. The school is aware of the risks presented by the very busy car park and does what it can to minimise these.
- 4.26 The medical rooms are equipped appropriately. Considerable sensitivity is shown when supporting pupils with specific medical needs. Medicines are stored and administered well. A large number of staff are trained in first aid and refresher courses are run for staff accompanying trips. Staff and pupils are very well supported by the school's qualified nursing team.
- 4.27 Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and stored as required for three years.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing body's committed support of the management and development of the school enables the school to meet its aims most successfully. The academic success and the investment in staff, buildings and resources since the previous inspection indicate the governors' astute financial management and their considerable effectiveness in guiding the school's development. Governors demonstrate a keen eye for educational standards and issues and an appetite for continued change. A review of governance is underway and new governors have been appointed to ensure a continued balance of skills. Governors maintain a strong focus on the school's priorities through a rigorous strategic planning process which is supported by strategy days with senior staff.
- 5.3 Governors have good insight into the life of the school. As well as the comprehensive reports from the headmaster, governors observe lessons and activities in the course of annual education days. Some governors contribute further by leading assemblies. Governors' attendance at school events gives them the opportunity of informal discussion with pupils, staff and parents. Governors have introduced key performance indicators to be reported upon by the headmaster, an additional means of providing support and challenge for growth. Governors are aware of the issues raised by some parents and pupils in respect of bullying and have supported the school's use of surveys in order to consider underlying causes and solutions.
- 5.4 The governing body is diligent in discharging its responsibilities for oversight of statutory requirements and safe recruitment procedures are now tightly managed. All policies are reviewed by the governors in the course of a year. A nominated governor oversees the safeguarding procedures and all governors are involved in the annual review of child protection policies and their implementation. Governors' pride in, and commitment to, the school is obvious.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 Since the previous inspection there has been a review of the leadership structure which has resulted in the creation of separate senior leadership and senior management teams, the latter including the head of the junior school, to further strengthen and give clarity to the educational direction of the school. A very small minority of parents expressed concern about the responsiveness of school leaders and managers to some aspects of school life. Inspection indicates that managers at all levels provide a clear, unambiguous educational direction aspiring to academic excellence and work hard to ensure that these aspirations are met. Their success is seen in the pupils' academic achievements and excellent personal development. Detailed and focused evaluation of development planning by senior managers is very effective in identifying and setting priorities and ensuring that these are

achieved; this then feeds into the whole-school plan to support the school's educational and strategic aims.

### ***Junior school***

- 5.7 The junior school's own management team meets weekly to consider both routine and strategic matters. It meets regularly with the senior school management team, with additional meetings of heads and deputies of both schools. This enables many areas of school development to be communicated and discussed in an efficient and clear manner.
- 5.8 Senior leaders appraise staff annually and regularly observe lessons. The excellent work of subject co-ordinators further supports and monitors the work of teachers. Standardised tests on entry at Year 3 provide a useful baseline helping staff to track individual pupils' progress, which they monitor by routine testing and grades.
- 5.9 A few parents said that they feel reports are not always as sufficiently clear in alerting them to emerging issues in order to ensure appropriate action is taken. The school is aware of parents' views, and is in the process of reviewing its procedures to ensure that there is greater transparency about pupils' progress. Inspection evidence shows that regular formal reports to parents are comprehensive, commenting appropriately on pupils' attainment and progress. The junior school's procedures for encouraging constructive relationships with parents remain good, as at the time of the previous report. Communication with parents is frequent and takes many forms: weekly newsletters, twice-termly reports and a welcoming atmosphere are all positive features of the way the school is managed.

### ***Senior school***

- 5.10 There has been considerable progress since the previous inspection in creating more rigorous systems of monitoring and a culture which is open to the change and innovation which the school leadership advocates. Committees such as the academic task force are proving effective in ensuring that standards of teaching and learning remain high and support the sharing of the most effective practice amongst staff. The school has established procedures such as learning walks and peer mentoring which monitor and encourage improvement in teaching and learning. Senior managers have made significant progress in training middle managers in the use of data to track pupils' performance and to set targets for improvement. While there has been an increase in the staffing of the learning support department, teachers' use of the information provided by the department is less effective in the senior school than in the junior school. Teachers' use of strategies identified in individual education plans is not routinely monitored by middle managers or the SLT.
- 5.11 Since the previous inspection, formal annual appraisal for all senior school staff has been developed to allow for reflection, identification of priorities and the setting of targets linked to the school's development plan. Staff share a sense of clear direction and ownership of the school's vision. Form tutors say that they feel well supported in academic and pastoral matters. A minority of pupils, however, say that the quality of pastoral support they experience is sometimes at odds with the school's stated commitment and that there are inconsistencies in the way that concerns are handled by different staff. Inspectors supported the view that the drive towards academic excellence sometimes has an impact on the need to respond to personal or sensitive issues which may affect adolescents. The school is aware of this tension and is taking steps to find new and better ways to respond to identified needs.

- 5.12 The senior school has taken very positive steps forward to improve links with parents, reflecting the good practice in the junior school. Full written reports are sent to parents twice each year; these are clear and contain comprehensive information on all aspects of a pupil's education including comments on each pupil's involvement in enrichment and co-curricular activities.

### ***Whole school***

- 5.13 The school is successful in appointing and retaining staff of high academic calibre in support of the school's aims. Newly appointed staff receive comprehensive training on arrival in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and then subsequently follow a planned induction programme. In addition, the SLT has introduced a mentoring system and a supportive welcome pack for new appointments. The management of non-teaching staff is highly successful. Safeguarding training for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, is comprehensive and regular. Arrangements for the checking of the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children have been reviewed and are thorough, and the required records are being maintained properly.
- 5.14 Parental contact is easy via email or phone call. The recent introduction of a digital learning environment, which includes facilitating easy access to their child's homework, has enabled parents to support their children from home. There are meetings arranged in the summer term for parents of new pupils joining the senior school so that they can meet staff.
- 5.15 The school has a suitable complaints policy and also a link on the website for parents to report any concerns. A few parents have indicated that they feel their concerns have not always been handled well by the school but inspectors found that the school follows its procedures correctly and that the majority of concerns are handled sensitively. Overall, the complaints process is well managed with the appropriate level of management oversight. Parents have the opportunity to be actively involved in the life of the school by joining the King's School Parents' Association, which is energetic and very successful in raising funds through charitable events, as is the King's School Rowing Club Parents' Association. Numerous further opportunities exist, including a termly gathering organised for parents and senior managers, at least four parents' forums held each term to discuss any topics where parents have views and an annual survey conducted for all new parents. As a result, there have been some excellent improvements such as revised arrangements for parents' evenings.
- 5.16 Parents have access to a considerable amount of information, including required policies, via the school website which is constantly updated. The school ensures that parents are kept well informed about school events via emails, website, newsletters, social media and the headmaster's blog.

**What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**