



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION
THE KING'S SCHOOL, CANTERBURY

MARCH 2017



SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	The King's School, Canterbury			
DfE Number	886/6048			
Registered charity number	307942			
Address	The King's School, Canterbury 25 The Precincts Canterbury Kent CT1 2ES			
Telephone number	01227 595501			
Email address	headmaster@kings-school.co.uk			
Headmaster	Mr Peter Roberts			
Chair of governors	The Very Reverend Robert Willis			
Age range	13 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	845			
	Boys	440	Girls	405
	Day pupils	175	Boarders	670
	Sixth Form	378		
Inspection dates	8 to 9 March 2017			

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

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

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

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

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

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

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

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff, the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house and school assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Christopher Ray	Reporting inspector
Mr Mark Calthrop-Owen	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mr John Tolputt	Team inspector (Former headmaster, Society of Heads school)
Mr Tim Dewes	Team inspector for boarding (Head of department, HMC school)
Mrs Sally Cunliffe	Team inspector for boarding (Former senior housemistress, HMC school)

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1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 The King's School, Canterbury is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between 13 and 18 years. The modern school is the direct inheritor of an unbroken tradition of worship, education and communal life which started when Augustine arrived in 597 AD and founded his monastery. The re-foundation of the school in 1541 established it as part of the reformed Canterbury Cathedral. The King's School, Canterbury is a charity, overseen by a board of governors. The chairman and four members of the board are drawn from the Canterbury Cathedral Foundation.
- 1.2 There are thirteen boarding houses, including a new girls' house built in 2016, together with three separate houses for day pupils. Since the previous inspection, the school has purchased a site for a new performing arts centre and has started to build a new day house.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school aims to anchor a 21st century education within the continuing history of the oldest school in the country, resting the education provided on the simultaneous pursuit of academic and co-curricular excellence.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 103. They require support with a range of learning and physical disabilities including dyslexia and dyspraxia. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 26 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL); 17 of these pupils receive support from the school. The school provides support for those with special gifts and talents, for example in sport, music, and drama as well as for the more able pupils.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Shell	Year 9
Remove	Year 10
Fifth	Year 11
6a	Year 12
6b	Year 13

Recommendations from previous inspections

- 1.6 The previous full inspection of the school by ISI was a standard inspection in February 2011. The recommendations from that inspection were:

- Increase the accountability to senior leaders of heads of department, housemasters and housemistresses, ensuring greater consistency of effective practice.
 - Further improve teaching through a stronger focus on assessing pupils' understanding in lessons, and matching work better to the needs of lower attaining pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
 - Ensure that all staff benefit from an effective appraisal system.
- 1.7 The school has fully met the recommendation to ensure that all staff benefit from an effective appraisal system. It has partly addressed the recommendations to increase the accountability of heads of departments and housemasters and housemistresses, ensuring greater consistency of effective practice, and to improve teaching through a stronger focus upon the assessment of pupils' needs of all abilities. In order to meet the recommendations fully further, improvements are required to ensure greater consistency: across the houses when signing pupils in and out; and across departments with regard to the needs of pupils with SEND, to marking and to the effective use of ICT.
- 1.8 The recommendations of the intermediate boarding welfare inspection in November 2014 were:
- Ensure that consistent routines are in place across the boarding houses for the final checks on boarders at the end of the day.
 - Fully record the governors' annual review and discussion of safeguarding procedures.
- 1.9 The school has fully met both recommendations of the previous inspection.

2. KEY FINDINGS

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

- Pupils achieve outstanding academic results, combining this with extensive extra-curricular success.
- Pupils achieve an excellent balance between the academic and the extra-curricular dimensions of their very busy lives in the school.
- Pupils are enthusiastic and often passionate learners who work well in collaboration with each other.
- Pupils make considerable and sustained contributions to the sense of intellectual excitement within the school community.
- All pupils make significant and often excellent progress, but this is less marked for pupils with SEND.

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

- Pupils demonstrate clear awareness that the decisions they make as young people may affect not only their success at the school but also their personal futures.
- Pupils show great integrity and have a very clear sense of justice and of the importance of rules and laws, based in part upon their excellent knowledge of current affairs.
- Pupils make positive and generous contributions to the wider world through their involvement in charitable fund-raising and related initiatives.
- Pupils greatly enjoy participating in school-wide competitions for houses such as those in art and in music.

Recommendations

2.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school is advised to make the following improvement:

- Explore ways in which the achievements of pupils with SEND may be further improved.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The pupils find, pursue and develop their own academic and co-curricular passions, in accord with the ethos of the school, which is promoted most effectively by the leadership and governors. The pupils achieve both outstanding academic results in public examinations and extensive co-curricular success. They are able to balance in their busy lives the many and various demands upon their time and energies.
- 3.3 Results achieved by the pupils at GCSE and A-level examinations between 2013 and 2015, the most recent years for which comparative data are available, are well above the national average for maintained schools and above the national average for maintained selective schools. Data provided by the school indicate that examination results for 2016 were similar. The pupils flourish academically, encouraged by teachers who have excellent subject knowledge and, in the best cases, deliver their lessons with enthusiasm and dedication. Pupils, including those with EAL and SEND, make at least good and often excellent progress. The targeted support provided by dedicated SEND and EAL staff makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Even so, progress made by those pupils with SEND is not quite as strong. In a small number of cases, the lessons observed and the work examined did not take full account of the individual needs of pupils with SEND.
- 3.4 A very large majority of parents in their pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the teaching helps their children to make good progress and develop skills for the future and that the school meets effectively the educational needs of their children. Again, a very large majority of pupils said that the school gives them the opportunity to learn and make good progress. However, a few pupils maintained that the marking of their work was not helping them to improve. In most of the work examined, pupils made at least good progress in all subject areas, encouraged by regular and helpful marking. However, the progress of some pupils over time was restricted by marking which failed to show them how they might improve. Many pupils welcomed the challenges for the more able provided by extended project qualifications (EPQs) and the introduction of the Pre-U certificate in philosophy and other subjects. Pupils typically achieve places at competitive universities in the UK and overseas, with sixth form pupils expressing appreciation of the helpful guidance provided.
- 3.5 Pupils enjoy a great deal of success in externally accredited examinations in music and in a wide range of local and national competitions, including Olympiads. Many pupils have been successful in national competitions in physics, biology, chemistry, design technology and poetry. Their further success in a wide range of pursuits such as art, drama, music, and sport reflects the extensive range of talents possessed by pupils as well as the many co-curricular opportunities available to them. In particular, excellent standards are achieved in ambitious repertoire performed in high profile concerts. Almost all parents said that the range of subjects is suitable for their children and that the school provides a good choice of activities. Over fifty pupils have reached Grade 8 in their externally accredited music examinations, with several pupils winning choral and organ scholarships at highly selective universities. Many pupils achieve county sporting honours, with some representing their countries in sports such as Paralympic skiing, hockey, fencing and rowing. Pupils in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme have achieved more than thirty gold awards during the last two years, with many more gaining bronze awards.
- 3.6 Pupils show considerable intellectual excitement across all areas of learning. Pupils are enthusiastic and often passionate learners. A few pupils say that they find some lessons uninteresting and in a very small number of cases, the teaching observed failed to engage the

pupils. The pupils have great pride in their school, tempered perhaps in their perceptive critical appraisal of its weaknesses as well as its strengths. They feel that they can express ideas freely: pupils take a keen interest in what their peers say. This was noted to excellent effect in the English, drama and physics classes observed, with pupils analysing each other's work and suggesting improvements. They are eager to celebrate each other's achievements in and beyond the classroom. They co-operate exceptionally well with their peers, as noted when performing experimental tasks in groups in chemistry or in paired work during French. They are keen to assist other pupils in their learning through the formal peer support mechanism as well as more informal methods. They are eager to participate in life beyond the classroom and are provided with ample opportunities in sport, music, drama and so much else by the school. Excellent perseverance was noted: the pupils are determined to succeed, for example, as they mastered complex choral sequences in a rehearsal of Scarlatti's *Stabat Mater*.

- 3.7 Pupils show a strong grasp of mathematical concepts and methods and their mathematical skills are well developed in all areas of the subject. They are articulate and listen attentively to the views and opinions of others. Their written work is often of a very high quality and demonstrates considerable analytical capacities. In the best lessons, all the pupils were involved and displayed strong communication skills. For example, pupils spoke in Mandarin with great confidence during a Chinese lesson. Pupils enjoy discussion, as noted in a personal, social and health education (PSHE) class on the health risks posed by e-smoking.
- 3.8 Pupils typically demonstrate outstanding knowledge and understanding across the curriculum and are adept at applying their skills from one area of learning to another, for example in the use of mathematical techniques in economics and physics. Their awareness of prior learning is used most effectively to strengthen their understanding. Strong musical skills were observed during an orchestral rehearsal, and innovative acting skills were evident in theatre studies lessons. Pupils respond extremely well to the opportunities available to them within and beyond the curriculum.
- 3.9 Some excellent examples of the use of information and communication technology (ICT) by pupils in their learning were observed. For example, to support their independent learning for EPQs, they demonstrated appropriately critical internet research skills; in design technology projects, they used specialist software to develop and present their ideas; and they made excellent use of digital techniques in photography. Pupils were also fully engaged in those lessons which made effective use of ICT, for example when using software to edit musical compositions. However, the active use of ICT is not yet fully developed, with a few teachers missing opportunities to employ ICT successfully in their classes.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate most effective critical thinking skills and can analyse complex problems, as seen for example in the individual project work done on China and on India by younger pupils for the annual global perspectives competition. Pupils successfully explore multifaceted ideas in subjects such as history when reflecting on the causes of the cold war and philosophy when considering moral dilemmas. University prizes have been won by sixth form pupils for a variety of essays, for example on topics involving the relationship between science and philosophy, racism in antiquity and attitudes to old age.
- 3.11 The pupils have extremely positive attitudes about their academic learning, music, sport, the wonderful historic setting of the school and so much else, all of which has captured their imaginations and enthusiasm. They are eager to extol the virtues of their school.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils are proud of their school and see themselves as part of its long and continuing history. They are inspired spiritually in their daily lives by the presence of Canterbury Cathedral and show great self-assurance without any trace of arrogance. They are confident and are determined to give their best in all situations. They feel positive about themselves and how well they are performing in the academic domain and beyond. They maintain that the success they have in the co-curricular domain gives them added self-confidence; for example, pupils gave tremendously assured musical performances during public concerts. Pupils are clear about their goals in life and how much they have benefitted from the school. A very large majority of parents in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses said that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their children's personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils say that their experiences, especially as boarders, gives them independence and self-confidence when making their own decisions. They demonstrate a clear awareness that the decisions they make as young people may affect not only their success at the school but also their personal futures. They engage effectively with discussions in PSHE relating, for example, to the moral implications of the age of consent. They readily accept the responsibility for prioritising their many commitments. They understand that they can make mistakes but learn from them, and they are not afraid to take sensible risks. Their self-confidence is further developed through their positive engagement with debate in class and beyond, with several achieving success in national and international debating challenges where the ability to take a balanced critical perspective is highly prized.
- 4.4 Pupils have a strong spiritual understanding, exemplified in particular through their appreciation of the musical, aesthetic and philosophical aspects of life, which is promoted by their active involvement in religious studies as well as in the creative subjects. Several pupils have won national awards for poems of remarkable sensitivity including the first prize in the annual Ovid competition for classical poetry. The pupils show huge enthusiasm for the annual art and music house competitions, where houses combine their efforts on collaborative aesthetic enterprises.
- 4.5 Pupils have a very clear sense of justice and of the importance of rules and laws. They exhibit an in-depth understanding of current affairs. They demonstrate very real strengths of personal integrity. They have learned to respect others, to give them the space to express their own ideas and opinions, and then to respond positively and supportively to their peers. They are determined to take responsibility for their own actions and have a keen awareness of the potential impact their behaviour may have on others. When they do things wrong, they know they have done wrong and readily admit it, for example when discovered being rather too relaxed about signing in and out of houses when on trips to town.
- 4.6 Pupils enjoy working with each other, both in classes and activities, but also when older pupils mentor and guide younger pupils, especially in the house environments. The sixteen peer listeners in the school, trained by an external agency, provide an invaluable service to others. Pupils attribute the evident camaraderie in the houses to events, competitions and charitable endeavours, which bring pupils together in the pursuit of a common purpose.
- 4.7 Pupils are proud when they are given responsibilities and are determined to fulfil them to the best of their capabilities. They are also proud to contribute articles to the many school publications, including the *Philosophy, Politics and Economics* magazine, which is edited by pupils. They benefit from the many opportunities available for pupils to hold positions of

responsibility, for example within their houses and sporting teams, or through their work as school prefects and leaders in the combined cadet force (CCF).

- 4.8 There is a definite generosity of spirit within the community of pupils, who see acting on behalf of others as a natural part of their lives. This is underpinned by the school's Christian ethos, together with its responsiveness to the needs of the wider world. Pupils are excellent citizens within their own community and have developed the capacities to make positive contributions to the wider world. They are involved in charitable fundraising and initiatives. During a house assembly, pupils spoke persuasively on the need for recycling, linking their polished presentation to their wider concerns about global issues. Relationships between pupils are typically characterised by kindness and sensitivity. A small minority of pupils maintained that the school did not always deal well with cases of bullying. Pupils interviewed said that instances of bullying are rare and dealt with firmly by the school, and the school's records provide corroboration for these views.
- 4.9 Pupils show tremendous respect for one another whatever their cultural or religious background. They see themselves as part of a cohesive school family, which includes former pupils. The pupils have a clear awareness of the importance of religion and of personal faith for themselves or for others within the school community. Most pupils said in their questionnaire response that they are encouraged to be tolerant of different faiths and beliefs; their parents agreed that the school actively promotes values of democracy, respect and tolerance. These values are clearly evident in the daily actions and thinking of the pupils, as seen for example in a sixth form religious studies class where a discussion of racism was used by them most effectively to reflect on their attitudes and behaviour. In the work examined, the pupils demonstrated a perceptive understanding of religious matters through diverse topics such as Mother Theresa, Islam, Ghandi and the rise of extremist views.
- 4.10 Pupils are fully aware of the importance of staying safe. Almost all pupils said they know how to keep safe when online. Pupils understand what is needed to keep healthy, both physically and mentally, encouraged by the PSHE programme, assemblies and house meetings, all of which provide clear guidance to them. They welcome the healthy eating options available to them within the school even if, when in town, they do not always make the right choices. Pupils of all standards join in sporting activities with enthusiasm, encouraged by the many opportunities available to them.