

School inspection report

30 April to 2 May

King's School, Rochester

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Governors and school leaders effectively self-review the quality of the school's provision and have a clear strategy to further develop the school. They ensure that the school meets the Standards.
2. The curriculum and co-curricular programme are planned and taught effectively. Pupils make good progress and achieve well at GCSE and A level. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) also make good progress overall. However, the additional support provided during lessons to prep and senior pupils who have SEND is not always as effective in facilitating progress as that provided in the pre-prep department.
3. The school implements a suitable framework for pupils' performance. However, leaders' use of assessment data to identify where additional support might be required to support prep and senior pupils' progress is not as effective as possible.
4. Behaviour in all areas of the school is positive and the behaviour and anti-bullying policies are clearly understood by pupils and staff alike. Any sanctions are fairly and consistently employed and incidents of low-level poor behaviour are sensitively and quickly addressed by staff. As a result, relationships between pupils, and between staff and pupils, are positive.
5. Interaction between the three areas of the school is effective in ensuring that pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education. Children from the pre-prep school regularly interact with their older peers and there is a clear transition programme in place. Likewise, pupils in the prep school have a number of opportunities to engage with senior school pupils including school visits, the programme of which is well designed to guide pupils through the different challenges faced as they get older. All pupils learn about the finance and the world of work at an appropriate level, including those in the pre-prep school who follow a 'money matters' course and those in the senior school who receive a balanced and up-to-date careers programme.
6. Boarders are well supervised and are encouraged effectively to engage with the wide range of co-curricular activities on offer. The accommodation is suitable and well maintained.
7. Safeguarding arrangements are effective and meet the requirements of current statutory guidance. Training provided by leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities is effective, as are the links with external agencies, including the Cathedral. Pupils are confident about how to report concerns, and the positive relationship between staff and pupils ensures that there is always someone to talk to if help is required. Effective safeguarding risk assessments are in place and the safeguarding governor regularly reviews the policy and its implementation.

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 the effectiveness of the additional support provided during lessons to prep and senior pupils who have SEND
- make more effective use of assessment data to identify where additional support is needed to ensure that prep and senior pupils progress as well as possible.

Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

8. Governors' oversight of the school ensures that leaders effectively carry out their responsibilities. Regular monitoring in areas such as risk, education and safeguarding ensure that policies are suitably implemented and that the Standards are consistently met.
9. Self-evaluation is effective throughout the school, from the governors' involvement in the self-evaluation form to the involvement of the school's senior leaders in the bi-annual development process undertaken by each department. There is a culture of listening to the views of pupils as part of this self-evaluation process. The recent move towards a 'whole school approach' to unify the pre-preparatory, preparatory and senior schools enables pupils to make a smooth transition from one setting to another. As a result, their wellbeing is better served by the consistency of the pastoral support and the clear sharing of the school's ethos.
10. The management of risk assessment is effective. Governors have oversight of the process through the 'Risk and Audit' committee and ensure that risk assessments are regularly reviewed. Risk assessments, including those for boarding and school trips, clearly identify potential risks and appropriate control measures to mitigate against these.
11. Leaders actively promote pupils' wellbeing and ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibility to do the same. There is a comprehensive training programme designed for teaching and support staff, ensuring both groups are appropriately knowledgeable about the regulations surrounding safeguarding, the 'Prevent duty', online safety, and first aid provision. In the context of a city centre site, staff are also made aware of contextual safeguarding risks and take care to supervise pupil movement around the site where appropriate.
12. Information is provided as required by the Standards. Policies are clearly displayed on the school's website and there is a regular timetable for reporting pupils' academic progress to parents. Leaders work regularly and effectively with other agencies, such as the local authority, and seek advice on the best ways to promote the wellbeing of pupils. Leaders provide the local authority with detailed reviews about pupils with educational, health and care (EHC) plans.
13. Leaders ensure that appropriate boarding policies and procedures are implemented effectively. Boarding staff have good knowledge and skills, enabling them to carry out their role effectively. They receive appropriate training and professional support for their role. Required information about boarding is made available to staff, pupils and parents.
14. A clear complaints policy, overseen by the governors, is adhered to at all stages. Appropriate records are kept and a three-stage system ensures that complaints are dealt with in an efficient and timely manner.
15. Leaders ensure that the school complies with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. The suitable accessibility plan identifies appropriate measures designed to increase access to the curriculum and the premises by any pupils with a disability.
16. Leadership of the pre-prep school is effective, and many positive aspects of the school, including the promotion of the school's ethos, are firmly rooted in this setting. Leaders know the pupils and staff well and maintain warm and friendly relationships with them. Leaders are supportive and work

closely with staff to ensure that the building, equipment, and staff training are all of a high standard, enabling them to promote pupils' wellbeing effectively.

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. The broad and balanced curriculum is well planned and suitable for pupils of all ages. The diverse range of subjects and effective curriculum implementation allow pupils to acquire knowledge and develop skills, resulting in confident and articulate pupils who perform well in public examinations. The English, mathematics and science curriculums broadly follow the National Curriculum but are not limited to it in their content. Many prep teachers have had training that has enhanced their understanding of the transition into the senior school. They use this understanding to refine their curriculum planning to support this transition. A number of departments have weekly or fortnightly planning meetings to link prep and senior school teachers and ensure appropriate progression of learning and skills.
19. The pre-prep department offers a varied and well-resourced curriculum. Children in the early years benefit from a curriculum explored in a way that fosters confident engagement with adults and peers, enhancing children's communication skills. Teachers effectively planning ranges from thematic overviews down to their adaptation of teaching methods during lessons. Leaders review plans at the end of each year in advance of next academic year, with recent changes to English plans to encourage more writing and text-handling by pupils. There are termly meetings between pre-prep and prep leaders to track the curriculum and ensure the effective transition between Years 3 and 4.
20. Pupils make good progress in their studies, as shown by GCSE and A-level results. Teaching reflects British values, such as that of mutual respect, and is informed by teachers' passion for and expertise in their subjects. This expertise fosters trust and encourages pupils to engage with advanced questions, sometimes extending beyond the planned curriculum. Teachers often encourage pupils to extend their knowledge by, for example, the setting of 'challenge preps'. The most effective lessons are well structured and challenging, promoting deep thinking and progress. Teachers utilise the school's location to enhance learning, incorporating the Cathedral, local walking and running routes for PE, and community projects into lessons effectively. For example, computer science pupils developed an app for a local food bank, developing their ability to apply their technical skills to real-life situations.
21. An appropriate assessment framework is in place across the school. In the senior school, pupils work towards public examinations, while the pre-prep department utilises effective tracking and assessment to quickly identify and support pupils needing additional support. This is evident in the detailed handover process each year, which provides the pupils' next teachers with comprehensive academic and pastoral data to plan suitable activities. However, in the preparatory and senior departments, the use of assessment data to identify and support pupils' progress is not as effective as that in the pre-prep department.
22. The department with responsibility for pupils who have SEND quickly identifies the specific needs of these pupils through effective assessment. In the pre-prep department, teachers adapt their methods, and specialist support is provided, enabling pupils who have SEND to progress well. However, the support for pupils who have SEND during prep and senior lessons is not as effective as that in the younger years.
23. There is an extensive programme of co-curricular and recreational activities. Creative skills and aesthetic appreciation are developed through activities such as ballet, the art club and the choristers programme. Social, physical and teamwork skills grow as a result of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF)

activities, and the variety of sports clubs on offer, and intellectual skills are challenged by the science society.

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

24. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

25. Leaders effectively implement a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme that emphasises the importance of inclusivity and respect, including for people's protected characteristics such as race, belief and sex. Pupils in Reception are taught to think about the perspective of others while those in the prep school are made aware of the range of faiths and ethnicities in this country and are taught ways of showing respect. In the senior school, teachers ensure that the content of the curriculum and use of inclusive teaching approaches and language promotes respect for and appreciation of diversity.
26. Pupils develop self-confidence and high self-esteem through the positive manner in which classroom discussions are conducted and the praise for their achievements that they receive from staff. Pupils also develop their self-confidence through experiences such as public speaking in assemblies and class discussions, and participating in performances. Staff encourage participation in a supportive atmosphere, setting high expectations and supporting emotional wellbeing by helping pupils recognise and manage emotions. The PSHE programme enhances this support by teaching pupils a range of wellbeing skills including for example how to deal with uncomfortable feelings, making mistakes, and how to manage stress.
27. The physical education (PE) programme develops pupils' understanding of how to develop healthy lifestyles in terms of diet, exercise and rest. As a result, pupils make positive choices about engagement with physical and sports activities.
28. Leaders promote positive behaviour through appropriate sanctions and rewards tailored to pupils' ages. Leaders apply sanctions fairly and provide pupils with effective support to enable them to understand and improve their behaviour. This support is offered by class or form teachers, peer mentors or the school counsellor or chaplain. Parents are encouraged to support the school's expectations and where necessary pupils are offered specific targets and strategies to help them improve behaviour. A robust anti-bullying strategy is in place which clearly outlines the responsibility of staff to be vigilant at all times and includes guidance for pupils on how to respond to any bullying. As a result, examples of bullying are rare and any incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with. Leaders maintain appropriate records of any behavioural and bullying incidents.
29. Pupils receive comprehensive relationships and sex education (RSE), focusing on relationships in younger years and including appropriate sex education as they mature. The programme encourages pupils to make informed decisions about their behaviour, and staff are mindful of the necessity of addressing the different physical and emotional development levels within classes. Effective teaching ensures pupils are comfortable discussing questions, and topics such as sexual harassment, consent and family planning for example help pupils to better prepare for life beyond school. Leaders consult with parents to discuss the content of the RSE programme and address any worries they might have.
30. Pupils' first aid needs are met by a well-equipped first aid centre staffed by a qualified nurse. Fire safety procedures are robust. Fire evacuation drills, including night time practices for boarders, are regularly conducted and assessed for their efficiency.

31. The school premises and accommodation are well maintained and suitable. Maintenance checks are carried out and recorded methodically. The refurbishment programme for boarding facilities ensures that they meet required standards for accommodation, catering, and first aid. Both boarding houses have well-equipped kitchens and washing facilities. Boarding staff organise activities promoting wellbeing, including bespoke cultural, sporting, and educational activities for boarders.
32. Admissions and attendance registers are effectively maintained. The risk of pupils missing education is minimised as a result of absences being followed up in a timely manner and the new destination of pupils moving schools being appropriately verified. Leaders inform the local authority when any pupils join or leave the school at non-standard times.

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

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

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

34. The school's effective schemes of work, aligned with its aims and ethos, actively promote fundamental British values, such as those of democracy and the rule of law. The PSHE programme develops pupils understanding of rights and responsibilities and the importance of being a global citizen in terms of, for example, conservation, global warming and human rights. In addition, pupils visit the Houses of Parliament to understand democracy and national institutions in the United Kingdom better, engage in discussions about equality and justice with visiting speakers, and in the early years, learn about democracy by voting for their daily reading book. Leaders and staff ensure that any discussion relating to political issues is impartial and unbiased.
35. The prefect system encourages pupils to serve as positive role models, and various school councils and groups effectively drive change within the school. Recent initiatives informed by pupils' representation and suggestions include updates to the school uniform, the introduction of multi-faith services, and improved provision of sanitary products.
36. Leaders encourage pupils to contribute to the community outside the school effectively. The well-established partnership programme affords pupils the opportunity to contribute widely to the community both within and beyond the school. Many pupils work to support younger pupils in the school either by volunteering to help in the classroom or by acting as peer mentors in, for example, the chorister programme. Pupils also work hard to support local and national charities including the local foodbank and the colour run for cancer research support.
37. The curriculum and the extensive co-curricular programme help promote pupils' social development effectively. Children in the early years develop a sense of community responsibility through playing with each other and finding solutions to any conflict, while pre-prep pupils also learn how to be safe pedestrians. Older prep pupils focus on compromise, collaboration, and shared responsibility.
38. Financial education is integrated throughout the school effectively. Pre-prep pupils learn about the origins of money and payment methods, while prep pupils discuss gambling and budget management. An internal enterprise challenge, including the senior pupils' 'tenner challenge,' enriches their financial understanding. Sixth-form pupils participate in a university preparation course covering budgeting and money management.
39. The careers programme provides up-to-date and impartial guidance, including alternatives to the school's sixth-form studies. Events such as careers days and business challenges connect pupils with local employers. Visits to careers fairs and university open days inform pupils about various career options, including apprenticeships. An online tool and one-to-one interviews help pupils explore career paths suited to their interests and aspirations. The PSHE curriculum for sixth-form pupils includes writing CVs, personal statements, and application letters and the careers coordinator collaborates with department heads to highlight career opportunities in their subjects. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stages in education or work.
40. Leaders and staff develop pupils' cultural awareness through PSHE lessons, form times and specific topics in history and geography for example. They also support the pupils' 'Diversity in Action' group, which promotes events like 'Black History Month'.

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

41. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

42. The school's safeguarding arrangements are effective. Leaders with designated safeguarding responsibilities respond quickly and appropriately to any safeguarding incidents that arise. They maintain efficient relations with safeguarding partners and refer concerns to relevant external agencies, when required. Appropriate arrangements are in place to respond to child-on-child abuse as well as allegations against staff.
43. Robust oversight from governors ensures that the safeguarding policy and procedures reflect current statutory guidance. The safeguarding governor meets the safeguarding team on a termly basis and evaluates the effectiveness of the policy in terms of both record-keeping and practical implementation. There is also an annual audit of the safeguarding records which identifies any emerging patterns and evidences policy changes accordingly.
44. Staff receive appropriate and timely safeguarding training, including when they first join the school and through half-termly updates. As a result, staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and understand how to report any concerns or disclosures that could arise. Staff understand and follow the school's whistleblowing policy.
45. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe, including when online, through PSHE lessons and additional guidance in form time. Suitable filtering and monitoring of school internet usage are in place and leaders follow up any contravention of the acceptable use policy effectively.
46. Pupils have a number of different ways of reporting concerns which are appropriate to their ages. These include talking to a trusted member of staff and the provision of 'Bob Boxes' and online messaging that enable a degree of anonymity should this be preferred.
47. All required safer recruitment checks are completed for governors, staff, supply staff and volunteers before they start working at the school. These checks are recorded accurately in a well-maintained single central record of appointments.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

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

School details

School	King's School, Rochester
Department for Education number	887/6000
Registered charity number	1084266
Address	King's School, Rochester King's School, Rochester Satis House Boley Hill Rochester ME1 1TE
Phone number	01634 888555
Email address	admissions@kings-rochester.co.uk
Website	www.kings-rochester.co.uk
Proprietor	The Governors of King's School
Chair	Mr John Maas, CBE
Headteacher	Mr Benjamin Charles
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	669
Number of boarding pupils	30
Date of previous inspection	24 April 2023

Information about the school

49. King's School, Rochester is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. The school's principal is the headmaster of the senior school, who delegates responsibility to the heads of the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools. The school is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors, some of whom are on the staff of Rochester Cathedral
50. The school and boarding houses occupy buildings on an open campus adjacent to Rochester Cathedral. Boarding is overseen by house parents in two single sex houses.
51. Pupils aged 3 to 7 years are housed in a separate pre-prep building on the school site. There are 57 children in the early years which consists of one Nursery and two Reception classes.
52. The school has identified 112 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
53. English is an additional language for 28 pupils.
54. The school states its aims that the members of the school community are happy and fulfilled, develop a love of learning through a unique breadth of experience, are adaptable and resilient for a fast-paced changing world, make an active difference to the lives of others in our community and beyond, and develop a sense of identity to lead purposeful lives as their own person

Inspection details

Inspection dates

30 April to 2 May

55. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. Inspection activities included:

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

56. 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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For more information, please visit isi.net