



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
THE KING ALFRED SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## The King Alfred School

Full Name of School	<b>The King Alfred School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>302/6004</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>312590</b>		
Address	<b>The King Alfred School Manor Wood 149 End Road London NW11 7HY</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>020 84575200</b>		
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Email Address	<b>kas@kingalfred.org.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Dawn Moore</b>		
Chair of Council	<b>Mrs Harriet Wilson</b>		
Age Range	<b>4 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>625</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (309 boys; 316 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS):	<b>40</b>	5-11: <b>258</b>
	11-18:	<b>327</b>	
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection Dates	<b>28 Jan 2014 to 31 Jan 2014</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 October 2008.

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) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, 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.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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 chair of Council and the president of The King Alfred School Society, observed a sample of the extra-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 Elizabeth Coley	Reporting Inspector
Mr Kenneth Adams	Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, ISA school)
Mrs Paula Hobbs	Team Inspector (Headteacher, ISA school)
Mr Alun Jones	Team Inspector (Principal, GSA school)
Mrs Linda Macfarlane	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Kathleen Silvester	Team Inspector (Former Head of Preparatory School, ISA school)
Mr Michael Streat	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Roger Tapping	Team Inspector (Director of Academic Development, GSA school)
Mr Peter Wells	Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Kirsten Jackson	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The King Alfred School is a co-educational day school for pupils from the ages of 4 to 18. It was founded by parents in 1898 with the belief that boys and girls should be educated together in a secular environment that encouraged learning for its own sake, and was based on the five values of mutual respect, individuality and self-reliance, social responsibility, the enjoyment of education and a broad definition of success. These values still underpin the school's aims of discovering and maximising the potential of each pupil by providing an outstanding educational experience that enables the emergence of relaxed, confident, tolerant and articulate adults who are able to take responsibility. The school strives to keep teaching and learning lively and enjoyable, through the encouragement of independent and active learning and investigation. It seeks to provide a happy, compassionate environment in which the emotional, physical and social development of each pupil is held in equal regard to academic progress. A distinctive feature of informality within the school is typified by the use of first names, the absence of school uniform and the use of as few rules as possible.
- 1.2 Situated since 1920 on the edge of Hampstead Heath, north west London, the school occupies two sites that are immediately across the road from one other. It is owned by The King Alfred School Society and run as a charitable trust, administered by a board of governors known as Council, whose members are all parents of current or former pupils, drawn from the society.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 625 pupils on the school roll, 309 boys and 316 girls, of whom 40 were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children up to the age of 5. A total of 258 pupils were in the Lower School, comprising Years 1 to 6. Of the 327 pupils in the Middle School, for Years 7 to 9, and the Upper School, for Years 10 to 13, 242 were in Years 7 to 11 and 85 were in Years 12 and 13.
- 1.4 The majority of pupils come from families with artistic, professional or business backgrounds and live within a ten-mile radius of the school; some pupils travel much further to attend. One hundred and twenty-seven pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom six have a statement of special educational needs. Eighty-seven pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and two receive support for learning English. The cultural backgrounds of pupils within the school are diverse, reflecting the surrounding communities. The school does not carry out standardised tests of ability in the Lower School, but it assesses the ability profile to be above the national average. The ability profile is above the national average in the Middle and Upper School. The ability profile of Years 12 and 13 is assessed to be in line with the national average. At all levels, a wide spread of abilities is represented.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, the Fives Court Building has been completed, housing a new Lower School staff room, school library, art room, auditorium, science room, information and communication technology (ICT) suite, and learning support rooms. Also completed in September 2011 were a new Lower School playground and farm.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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

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

- 2.1 The school largely fulfils its aims. Pupils' achievements as they move through the school are good, from the EYFS to Year 13, and pupils generally make effective progress across academic and extra-curricular activities, with a very wide range of pursuits available through the afternoon 'Choice' programme, clubs, visits and residential trips. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 achieve particularly well. The excellent relationships amongst all in the school community, the pupils' good behaviour and their positive attitudes to learning support their high levels of attainment. The school provides a good curriculum and this, together with effective teaching and assessment, enables pupils to develop their strong literacy, numeracy and creative skills. Standards in music, drama, design and technology (DT) and art are particularly high, as seen in the various rehearsals, artefacts and displays around the school. The timetable in the Lower School is somewhat complex and is not fully synchronised with the Middle and Upper School. The individual provision for those who have SEND or EAL is of high quality and, in most class lessons, staff support enables these pupils to make good progress in relation to their ability. The provision for more able pupils is not consistent; on occasions, the pace is too slow or tasks are not sufficiently matched to individual pupils' needs, and so independent learning skills are inhibited because of lack of challenge.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils is excellent. Pupils throughout the school are confident, articulate and mature for their ages. Their social development, from the youngest year groups, is extremely strong and pupils work very well together. The various mentoring systems used in the Lower School and Middle and Upper School, where older pupils assist younger ones in numerous ways, provide exceptional support. Throughout the school, pupils have a strong awareness of responsibilities to others less fortunate around the world, and they appreciate their own and others' cultural heritage. The care given by all staff, teaching and non-teaching, throughout the school is excellent, and is a strong contributory factor to pupils' personal development. The arrangements for pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are good.
- 2.3 Council has a sound oversight of the school and makes strong financial provision, but its members have insufficient experience of educational leadership to support and challenge senior leaders. Whilst all staff have received an enhanced disclosure and barred list check, systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's compliance with regulatory requirements are not sufficiently rigorous. Leadership and management, including links with parents, are good throughout the school, ensuring that its aims are largely fulfilled. Senior leadership, supported by a strong staff team, shows strong commitment to the good achievement of the pupils and their excellent personal development. Management processes, such as appraisal, are undertaken and link effectively to in-service training, and the role and responsibilities of middle management have been developed since the previous inspection. However, relatively informal monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning results in an inconsistent approach between departments. Since the previous inspection, the school has made good progress concerning the assessment and recording of pupils' work and the implementation of assessment procedures in the EYFS. Sound progress has been made concerning clarification of the homework policy and the quality of marking.

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

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

- 2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:
- ensure that recruitment checks concerning qualifications, references, medical fitness and overseas checks are carried out on all staff before they begin work at the school [Part 4, paragraphs 19.(2)(b)(ii) and (iv), and 3), under Suitability of staff and proprietors, and for the same reason Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

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

- 2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Broaden the range of expertise of Council to include representation with experience of educational leadership.
  2. Share the best teaching practice within the school to ensure that more able pupils are suitably challenged in all lessons.
  3. Rigorously monitor the quality of planning, teaching and learning to ensure consistency within and between subjects.
  4. Align the timetable between the Lower and Middle/Upper Schools to create a more coherent approach to the curriculum.

### **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' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The aims and values and of the school, to encourage individuality and self-reliance, and the enjoyment of education, and to maintain a broad definition of success, underpin the approach to their learning that pupils acquire throughout their time at school.
- 3.3 Children in the EYFS make good progress during their time in the setting. They recognise the initial sounds of words, exploring simple alliteration. Their reading and writing skills are emerging and they worked well together to read a fictional letter from an alien asking for help in saving the world. They have good language awareness, using their knowledge with confidence in French lessons, and answer the register in French and Spanish. In their mathematical development, they know how to perform simple addition and subtraction with numbers to ten. They are keen to explore and form hypotheses. The children are highly articulate. They use computers independently for making pictures, and are starting to use them to write. Those children with SEND or EAL are given the support they need from their key person to enable them to make equally good progress in their learning.
- 3.4 Speaking and listening skills are very highly developed at all ages. Pupils are articulate and confident in conversation with each other and with adults. They are quick to debate issues in class, reason well, and are open in expressing their opinions and respectful of those of others. Literacy and numeracy skills are good and are successfully applied across the curriculum. Information and communication technology is used skilfully and appropriately by pupils of all ages; in the Lower School, this marks an improvement since the previous inspection. It is used particularly effectively in music in the Middle and Upper School. Independent learning skills are generally developed effectively in line with the school's aims, and pupils demonstrate these in some subjects. Opportunities to use logical and independent thought are occasionally restricted because of an over-prescribed style of teaching.
- 3.5 Creativity is highly valued in the school, and this is reflected in particular in the high quality of pupils' art, DT, drama and music. For example, in 2012 the school won the Music for Youth national jazz award. Pupils are frequently successful in the Watford music festival and many gain merits or distinctions in Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music and London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art examinations. The quality of art and DT work, such as the furniture on display in the school, is excellent. In sport, pupils have gained individual honours in regional athletics and team success in local football, netball and rounders tournaments. Some pupils pursue The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, as part of the 'Choice' programme of activities on one afternoon each week, and achieve bronze level. Pupils' choices for tertiary education cover a broad spectrum. The vast majority take up places at university; others gain places at schools and academies of music or art colleges, reflecting the school's value of a broad definition of success. Almost all pupils are awarded a place at the institution of their choice.
- 3.6 In the Lower School, pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. The inspection evidence, based on

lesson observations, pupils' written work and curriculum interviews with them, confirms this judgement. Pupils follow a diverse and broad-based curriculum and the majority proceed into the Middle School. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools. Results in 2012 were lower than in 2010 to 2011, when they were similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. A-level performance has been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Results in 2012, when they were above the national average for maintained selective schools, were better than in 2010 to 11. These levels of attainment indicate that, as pupils move through the school, they make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability, and in Years 12 and 13, often excellent progress.

- 3.7 Pupils with SEND, including those with a statement of special educational needs, make good progress in their learning because of the excellent support they are given by specialist staff in individual or group lessons. When support staff are present within subject lessons, they ask appropriate questions of pupils to enable them to persevere and succeed in the task set. For example, in a lesson in the Lower School on percentages, pupils who needed extra support were encouraged through good questioning from the learning support assistant to reason for themselves when finding a particular percentage of an amount of money. Pupils with EAL are also supported through the continual use of particular words and subject-specific language so that they too make good progress in their acquisition and development of English language skills. In the majority of lessons, more able pupils are given tasks that challenge them but on the occasions where this does not happen, their progress is less rapid.
- 3.8 Pupils show great enjoyment of their lessons in all year groups, work hard in class and on their homework, and take pride in the presentation of their written work. They are quick to take the initiative in seeking additional assistance from staff outside class in order to support their learning when necessary. They appreciate the high degree of individual attention their teachers give them, and act with a correspondingly high degree of maturity. This is particularly true in Years 12 and 13 in which the more able respond to the extra challenges provided, leading to higher levels of achievement. Whilst teacher-directed co-operation is a successful feature within lessons, pupils also collaborate freely and independently, supporting each other's learning inside and outside class, which makes a significant and positive contribution to their achievement. In a small minority of lessons observed, the pupils' application was relatively limited, sometimes as a result of poor behaviour or the lack of pace within a lesson, and therefore the volume of work they covered and the progress they made were significantly reduced.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.10 The curriculum is broad and comprehensive, and provides a programme of study suitable for all abilities. It supports the aims of the school in encouraging enjoyment of education, and learning for its own sake, and makes an effective contribution to the good achievement of the pupils.
- 3.11 In the EYFS, teachers focus first on children's communication and language skills, personal, social and emotional, and physical development. By the middle of the academic year, they focus more on reading, writing, numeracy and expressive arts, by which time all areas of learning make a significant contribution to children's progress. There is an excellent balance of adult-led and child-initiated opportunities, with the children often suggesting future activities. The outdoor areas provide a variety of environments in which to learn and play, and are very well resourced; all planning includes their use, an improvement since the previous inspection. In the Lower School, a successful feature is that teaching is largely topic-based and skills are developed through significant contributions from specialist teachers in French, DT, ICT, art and music. This programme of topics is broadly linked to parts of the National Curriculum and covers all the required areas of learning. It is supported by comprehensive planning to integrate the chosen topic across all subjects. Timetabling has proved complex, in terms of both lesson timing and staff availability, and does not make for a coherent approach to the curriculum.
- 3.12 In Years 7 to 9, a wide range of subjects is offered, with variations of curriculum time for English, mathematics and science to balance overall allocation across the three years. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow International GCSE courses in science and English, with the science course having begun in Year 9. Additionally, three options provide a balanced curriculum and reflect pupils' choices within the constraints of the school's resources. In Years 12 and 13, 25 subjects are offered at A level, representing good breadth for the size of the cohorts and offering programmes suited to individual needs and interests. In addition, significant opportunity for independent research is available through the Extended Project Qualification. Curriculum planning, which is sound overall in the Middle and Upper School, shows significant variation of practice between subject departments. Enrichment of the curriculum is very successfully achieved by the popular 'Choice' programme, for Years 7 to 11, which offers a rich range of options, from cooking to building magnetic transport systems. Years 12 and 13 benefit from weekly enrichment courses that are designed to provide leadership experiences and promote teamwork and adaptability, and develop transferable skills. Some modules are compulsory, such as research skills for A level and beyond. Others offer pupils an excellent opportunity to gain further qualifications in areas ranging from sports leadership to skills for babysitters or the driving theory test. Work experience is undertaken in Year 12.
- 3.13 The provision for pupils with SEND in individual lessons given by specialists throughout the school is excellent, achieved by early identification, regular monitoring and careful evaluation of the pupils' good progress against targets for improvement. Support is also strong within the vast majority of subject lessons, where teaching staff or assistants help these pupils to progress through tasks well matched to their ability or by offering individual assistance. Pupils with a statement of special educational needs are given individual education plans that ensure they are provided with an education which fully meets the requirements of their

statements. Other pupils with SEND benefit from action plans or profiles, with targets that enable them to make good progress along with their peers. Parents are fully involved in the regular reviews of their children's progress. In the EYFS, the key person ensures that these children are on task and given support as necessary. Throughout the school, a small number of pupils with EAL have weekly one-to-one support lessons so that they acquire the necessary fluency in English as swiftly as possible, to enable them to access the curriculum effectively. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very small minority of parents indicated the view that very able pupils do not receive appropriate support. Inspectors found that the school is in the early stages of identifying pupils who are more able. Various activities are developed for them to pursue in their free time, and some subject areas run clubs to provide challenge and opportunities to enter regional or national competitions, for example in mathematics, geography and computer programming. However, inspectors agree that, in some lessons, tasks are not well matched to the needs of more able pupils. In the EYFS, more able children are identified through detailed observations, and planning identifies how their learning is to be extended, so that the needs of all children are effectively met.

- 3.14 A comprehensive careers programme builds from Year 7, using age-appropriate games and materials, and is complemented by visiting speakers, individual interviews and counselling from key qualified staff, whose support is greatly appreciated by pupils. A personal, social and health education (PSHE) steering group meets regularly to monitor and develop a structured programme throughout the school. The content of the programme is appropriate and reflects the aims of the school. In Years 7 to 9, it is delivered in a discrete PSHE lesson, and in Years 10 and 11, where topics result from pupils' requests, in the tutor period. In Years 12 and 13, tutors raise topical themes for discussion, though these practices are not consistent.
- 3.15 Pupils' educational experience is broadened and enriched by an excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, including sports, creative arts, music, crafts, cookery, languages, literature, science and technology, for all but the very youngest pupils. Sports teams represent the school in competitions and tournaments locally, regionally and nationally. A variety of instrumental music tuition is offered. The school organises a wide range of educational visits, which makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Outdoor pursuits are enjoyed during residential and camping trips, and ski holidays and expeditions abroad. Visits to museums and art galleries occur regularly and other places of interest are explored in the capital. Visitors are welcomed into school to share their expertise and experiences, for example those of a holocaust survivor. In 2013, those in Year 8 experienced a 'village' project, where pupils worked together from the perspective of self-sufficiency, creating their own accommodation and having to find ways of organising life amongst themselves.
- 3.16 Links with the community are excellent and make a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Connections have been forged with local schools, where pupils give support to those with disabilities. Invitations are issued to others to attend the school's lecture programme, which encourages pupils from different schools to learn together, and pupils participate in music festivals. International links are fostered through charitable involvement with schools and projects further afield, for example in Sri Lanka and Namibia.

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

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.18 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils were almost unanimous in saying that their teachers help them to learn and that they are making good progress in their work. Teaching is in line with the school's aim to discover and maximise the potential of each pupil, and, in many lessons, lively teaching contributes well to the pupils' good achievement. Secure subject knowledge coupled with enthusiasm ensures that teaching is motivational and encourages application. Lessons are generally well planned and employ a wide range of teaching methods to make good use of available resources, including ICT.
- 3.19 In the EYFS, the high expectations and knowledge of staff enable all children to learn effectively. Staff and children work extremely well together in an atmosphere of mutual respect, the staff acting as good role models for the children. Teaching is energetic and enthusiastic, and staff are fully involved with the children's learning, encouraging them to play and explore, ask questions and be active. Children benefit from high quality specialist teaching in French, DT, ICT, music, library skills and physical education. Since the previous inspection, planning processes have improved and all specialist teaching is now integrated well within the programme of work in the classroom.
- 3.20 From the Lower School upwards, the best lessons inspire a love of learning, and the subject content is engaging and accessible for pupils of all abilities. Enthusiastic teaching results in a challenging pace for pupils of all abilities and high expectations are established. In the less successful lessons, teaching is over-prescribed and lacks opportunities to nurture pupils' sense of enquiry. On occasion, minor disruptive behaviour is not managed well, reducing the amount of work being completed. Very positive relationships between teachers and pupils ensure a collaborative approach to learning in the large majority of lessons, where the contribution of all pupils is valued and encouraged, with emphasis on positive peer support. A feature of lessons observed in Years 12 and 13 was the level of questioning, which challenged pupils to think beyond the point they had reached, enabling them to use their initiative and critical thinking skills, and ensuring that they made excellent progress in their knowledge and understanding.
- 3.21 Excellent individual support is given to those who are identified with SEND or EAL and teachers are aware of the strategies required to ensure their inclusion and progress. These pupils are supported well according to their needs in most subjects and teachers freely give of their time to assist pupils outside mainstream timetabled lessons. Those pupils who have a statement of special educational needs are provided with an education which meets the requirements of their statement. The school is responding positively to the identified need to challenge more able pupils. A programme to cater for them is developing effectively in activities provided beyond the timetable but their needs are not yet consistently met in the classroom. In a few lessons, there is limited provision for challenging the more able because all pupils are expected to do the same work, and on these occasions learning is less rapid. In the best lessons, teaching ensures that tasks are well matched to individual pupils' needs and there are high expectations of all.
- 3.22 In the Middle and Upper School, a very small minority of pupils indicated in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they do not feel their homework helps them to learn and that teachers do not always ensure that they have an appropriate

amount of work to do. Parents also raised a concern about homework. Inspectors agree that a lack of a formal homework timetable and the option for subject staff to select when to set tasks lead to an inconsistency in the volume of homework that is set. However, tutors take an overview in helping pupils to manage their workload and the tasks set are intrinsic to the work in progress.

- 3.23 The whole school has responded soundly to the recommendations of the previous inspection by implementing an assessment, marking and homework policy. In the Middle and Upper School, marking and assessment of pupils' work are regulated by individual department policy. Throughout the school, marking is frequent, regular and carefully recorded by subject staff. The quality and effectiveness of marking are inconsistent but, in a number of lessons seen and in the work examined, it is apparent that teachers generally provide regular written comments that suggest strategies for improvement. Less effective marking is cursory, with limited guidance on what is required to progress. The quality of oral feedback and advice given to individual pupils is good and inspires confidence.
- 3.24 Assessment throughout the school is carefully recorded within departments to ensure that the progress of individual pupils is successfully monitored, and generally challenging but manageable targets for improvement are established. Lower School teachers know each pupil's capabilities, and a mechanism for monitoring checks individuals' progress in numeracy and literacy. The EYFS has implemented assessment procedures effectively, as recommended at the time of the previous inspection. The setting has recently introduced a system for assessing children's skills as they enter Reception, which is intended to enable further improvement in monitoring the progress of individual children.

## **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 Pupils achieve a high level of personal development that reflects the school's aims and is implicit in its ethos. The pupils' spiritual development is very strong and they clearly appreciate non-material dimensions of life. This excellent spiritual awareness, where pupils develop self-confidence and self-esteem, and understand the need to take responsibility for their own actions, begins from the EYFS and Lower School through the 'Trees of Promises', 'Classroom Contracts' and PSHE lessons. Pupils develop strong self-knowledge in the Middle and Upper School through aspects of the PSHE programme, which include a focus on personal hopes and fears. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds have a caring and respectful attitude towards each other. The tree house, village project, various camps, forge and libraries all provide opportunities for reflection and are well used by pupils as contemplative spaces.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, taking responsibility for their own behaviour from a very young age, with minimum intervention. Pupils of all ages understand and respond well to the school's ethos. They develop strong personal values through a wide variety of opportunities in the creative and performing arts. Pupils show considerable mutual respect when appraising the work of others, for example in music or art. In drama, pupils explore moral conflict through characterisation. Older pupils spoke of the emphasis on respect when discussing the Middle East conflict. Pupils develop strong moral values when studying rights and responsibilities, and Middle School pupils showed considerable maturity and respect when discussing gender inequality in a PSHE lesson.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is excellent. A very small minority of pupils expressed in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they do not have opportunities to take on responsibilities. Inspectors found that pupils embrace the many opportunities to take on different levels of responsibility within the whole school community. Members of the two school councils, who are representatives from each class in the school, regularly give feedback to other pupils during assemblies. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 have taken on an individual and collective task for producing a mutual respect document, which clarifies the rights and responsibilities of pupils, together with the leadership. Pupils respond to change and unpredictability and develop excellent team skills through camps organised for Years 4 to 9, which encourage individual and collective responsibility. Strong co-operation and mutual support are seen in lessons and in activities when pupils are working collaboratively. Pupils show great empathy for those less fortunate than themselves. In a geography lesson, they showed considerable compassion for Montserrat volcanic eruption victims. Charity work abounds. Pupils readily give of themselves and have numerous opportunities at home and abroad to show their altruistic natures and a well-developed social conscience. They have a strong knowledge of the British political system through the Upper School PSHE course and the academic lectures that take place at least monthly.
- 4.5 Pupils have an excellent appreciation of their own and other cultures. They experience and explore at first hand a range of cultures and they regard all faiths and backgrounds with respect. They develop strong knowledge and a mutual

understanding through the school's inclusive and diverse community and through the organisation of numerous trips to cultural venues at home and abroad. Activities such as learning Mandarin and the study of the festivals celebrated by different faiths provide a variety of opportunities for cultural development.

- 4.6 In the EYFS, children's personal development is excellent; they take turns in a mature way. They concentrate and persevere with their activities. They are excellent at working co-operatively and are keen to help, for example when tidying up. Children act responsibly towards others and look after one another. They have the confidence to make sensible choices. They are creative and engage imaginatively with others, learning to compromise when trying to complete a joint project. Frequent contact between children in Reception and Year 1, who share the same site, and their teachers helps to prepare children for transfer at the end of the EYFS; Year 1 pupils are 'buddies' for the children in Reception.
- 4.7 Pupils leave the school demonstrating a high standard of personal development. They are friendly, mature and independent citizens; they have developed a strong social awareness of the needs of others and a clear understanding of personal responsibility for their own actions.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 All staff provide excellent support and guidance for pupils, which accords well with the school's aims. These arrangements make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. Form tutors provide a much appreciated first point of contact for pupils and their parents. They are supported by senior managers and a strong counselling service, whose work is based on a set of comprehensive welfare and behavioural policies. Pupils say that they have a range of staff to turn to should they need support and guidance.
- 4.10 In the EYFS, key people enable the children to be extremely happy at school and feel secure in a calm, nurturing and warm environment, ensuring that each child's needs are met. Staff know the children extremely well and recognise the individuality of each child, promoting co-operative learning and good behaviour both in the classroom and in the playground. Children enjoy excellent relationships with each other. At break, they are provided with fruit and learn about healthy eating. The setting helps them to become fully independent in matters of personal hygiene.
- 4.11 Throughout the school, relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, in and out of the classroom. Pupils value the care and support of their teachers. Pupils get on well across age groups, with older pupils in the Lower, Middle and Upper School acting as mentors or reading 'buddies' for the younger ones. Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits; the quality and quantity of the food at lunch are good, with a variety of healthy options always available. Pupils say that they enjoy the meals. The PSHE curriculum in Years 1 to 9 includes lessons on healthy eating. The physical education curriculum and extra-curricular programme provide opportunities for all pupils to take regular exercise.
- 4.12 The school's behavioural policy succeeds in promoting good behaviour. Pupils are encouraged and supported to behave well and they acknowledge the school's expectations; they are invariably helpful and courteous towards others. The school has effective measures for dealing with harassment and bullying. Policies provide good guidance on anti-bullying measures and on preventing cyber-bullying.

Personal, social and health education lessons also deal with these issues. Pupils throughout the school say that bullying is rare and, if an incident were to occur, they are confident that it would be dealt with quickly and effectively. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that a very small minority of parents are concerned about bullying. Inspectors found that any incidents of bullying are recorded in detail and responded to promptly, with parents being involved at the earliest opportunity. A log is kept of any serious disciplinary offences. A very small minority of pupils indicated in response to the questionnaire that sanctions are not fairly given. Inspectors found that sanctions are proportionate and consistently applied and, in discussion, pupils felt that they are fair. If disciplinary measures are needed in the case of a pupil with SEND, due account is taken of any related difficulty or disability. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

- 4.13 A very small minority of pupils indicated in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires that they do not feel the school asks for their opinions or responds to them. Inspectors found that the Middle and Upper School council, chaired and managed by pupils in Years 12 and 13, the Lower School council and action groups in Years 7 to 9 provide effective methods for the school to seek the views of pupils. Pupils may also put any suggestions they have in a suggestion box for consideration by senior managers.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.15 This reflects the school's aims of providing a strong sense of community within an atmosphere of individual freedom, and makes a significant contribution to the personal development of pupils. A strong safeguarding culture is effective on a day-to-day basis, including in the EYFS. All staff have been trained in safeguarding according to their responsibilities, and this gives them a keen awareness of the importance of the child protection arrangements and their implementation. Records relating to safeguarding are detailed and co-ordinated effectively to ensure that the school has a clear overview of the pupils' needs. The school is in close touch with relevant authorities in relation to safeguarding matters and child protection. However, the implementation of the policy concerning recruitment checks has not been sufficiently rigorous.
- 4.16 All necessary measures have been taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Fire practices are held regularly and an external fire risk assessment has been carried out. Fire procedures are published for all staff and are displayed around the school. Health and safety policies and procedures are thorough, regularly reviewed and published for all departments. A health and safety committee meets to review any areas of concern within the school and staff are effectively deployed to ensure proper supervision of all pupils. Risk assessments are undertaken in all areas of school life, including for external visits. In the EYFS, regular risk assessments promote safety within the setting. Throughout the school, the arrangements for pupils who fall ill or are injured are appropriate and strong provision is made for the welfare of those who have SEND. The attendance and admission registers are completed accurately, suitably maintained and stored for three years.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The members of Council have a suitable oversight of all sections of the school, in line with its aims. Some areas of governance are strong, such as financial planning, as seen in the new building, which provides pupils with the accommodation, human and material resources needed for them to achieve well. Council has made a significant contribution to the EYFS, equipping the setting as an imaginative, stimulating, adventurous and exciting place to learn. Council is supplied with regular detailed reports from the leadership and bursar, which enable it to have clear information about the day-to-day life of the school, particularly educational standards, successes and challenges. In addition, members of Council support school activities and periodically invite different staff to attend its meetings in order to inform them of current departmental issues.
- 5.3 Individual members of Council take responsibility for liaising with staff about various aspects of school life, for example safeguarding, health and safety, the single central register and the EYFS. Effective induction is carried out when new members join. The current committee structure is complicated, with eight different committees, and the board has recognised that it is not sufficiently streamlined to focus on outcomes for pupils. The range of expertise which the members bring to Council is wide, but lacks representation with experience of educational leadership to support and challenge senior management effectively. Council is generally aware of its responsibilities by undertaking some training opportunities to assist in keeping abreast of regulatory requirements, and meets most of its statutory obligations, for example by carrying out the annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures. However, its monitoring of regulatory requirements, including policies, has not been sufficiently rigorous in the past, and several documents have needed revision during the inspection period. In addition, a few recruitment checks on a very small number of staff have not been carried out before they began work at the school. Council regularly reviews the school's development plan, and close communication is maintained between the chair and the leadership, for the benefit of the school, enabling appropriate stimulus and growth for improvement.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.5 Leadership and management effectively support the school's aims, by providing opportunities and experiences that enable the emergence of relaxed, confident, tolerant and articulate adults who are able to take responsibility for planning their own lives. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, a very small minority of parents indicated the view that the school is not well led or managed. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Senior managers provide purposeful leadership, and their awareness of the needs of the school through self-evaluation is reflected in the good quality of education and the excellent personal development of the pupils. The senior management teams of the whole school and the Lower School have been restructured since the previous inspection, with most appointments being made within the last two years. Regular meetings ensure that the school's aims are appropriately supported. Clear educational direction is given through a well-defined school development plan that is effectively aligned with the original values of the school. Its aims have been prioritised, financial implications have been explored and success criteria have been established, so that it is constructed as a working document.
- 5.6 Good progress has been made in response to the previous inspection. The roles and responsibilities of heads of department and co-ordinators have been strengthened, and the assessment and recording of pupils' work have improved. The school is aware that middle management has not yet fully formalised monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in order for staff to ensure that all pupils are achieving as well as they can. Heads of department have prepared academic policies but the quality of their planning is inconsistent, as is curriculum liaison between the Lower and Middle/Upper Schools. The appraisal process is effectively linked to in-service training opportunities, and these are supported as a priority. All staff are fully involved in the pastoral care of pupils. Appropriate policies have been drawn up covering most aspects of school life, and several of these have been reviewed over the course of the inspection process. All staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.7 A few recruitment procedures were not carried out on a very small number of staff before they began work at the school, including a small number of checks on qualifications or medical fitness, and obtaining second references or overseas police checks. The required enhanced disclosures and barred list checks have been carried out on all staff, with a centralised record being accurately maintained. Teaching staff are deployed effectively and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and welfare, enabling appropriate support to be given to them, particularly those who have SEND or EAL. Efficient arrangements operate for the day-to-day administration of the school, with administrative, grounds, catering and cleaning staff providing good quality assistance.
- 5.8 The leadership and management of the EYFS have a very clear vision for the development of the setting and regular self-evaluation ensures that targets are set for continued improvement. Staff carefully oversee the educational programmes and the welfare of the children is a high priority, with day-to-day safeguarding being effectively implemented. Staff make the setting a bright, warm, welcoming place where children's own work is celebrated, respected and valued. The training needs of staff are met and they are encouraged to develop their skills. There is an annual

appraisal system for teachers and teaching assistants, and a strong induction programme. Key people are involved in opportunities for professional supervision to develop their roles further and to enable them to work closely with children's families. Good use is made of the local authority and external agencies, alongside partnerships with parents, to ensure those children who need extra support receive the interventions they require. Since the previous inspection, assessment and planning procedures have been developed and improved.

- 5.9 The school maintains excellent relationships with parents, in accordance with its aims. The parents are positive about the school's provision for their children; in their responses to the questionnaire, almost all indicated that they believe their children are happy and feel safe at school, that their children are well looked after and that they would recommend the school to other parents. Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school in a variety of ways, from offering their professional expertise to support the pupils' learning, to fund-raising activities or volunteering their assistance in class. In addition to social events, there are many opportunities for parents to attend regular lectures, films and debates that are organised by the school.
- 5.10 A very small minority of responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicated that parents feel their concerns are not handled well. Inspectors found that records of complaints are fully documented and detailed, and that the complaints procedure is closely and correctly followed. Any issues arising are dealt with promptly and sensitively.
- 5.11 Close communication with parents is maintained through regular newsletters, reports, meetings, opportunities to attend the Friday café and the leadership's report at the Annual General Meeting of The King Alfred School Society. The website is regularly updated with news items and provides access to the required documents for parents. A very small minority of parents indicated that they are not satisfied with the information they are provided about their children's progress. Inspectors found that whilst many written reports do not state clear targets or next steps for learning, they do provide a clear picture of each pupil's progress and reflect the value placed on each individual. Parents have numerous opportunities to discuss their children's progress at regular parents' evenings, and staff and senior managers are always available to discuss the academic progress or welfare of pupils with their parents.
- 5.12 Parents of children in the EYFS are confident that any concerns will be dealt with promptly. They are fully involved in their children's learning and feel part of the school community. Parents speak highly of the induction programme when their children first begin and of the continuing excellent communication with the school. They appreciate all the chances they have to share in their children's learning, through both formal and informal meetings, and through highly informative reports that show how well teachers understand all individual children and their progress.

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