



The King's School, Witney

Inspection report

This inspection was carried out under section 109 of the Education and Skills Act 2008. Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has been approved by the Secretary of State in the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake inspections in designated independent schools within membership of the Christian Schools Trust (CST) or the Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMSUK).

DfE number:	931/6100
Association:	CST
Date of inspection:	2 nd - 5 th March 2015
Lead Inspector:	Mr C Schenk
Team inspectors:	Mr G-J Barnes Mrs A Iqbal
Age range of pupils:	3 - 16 years
Number on roll:	204
Full-time:	82 boys 87 girls
Part-time:	12 boys 23 girls
Number of pupils with an EHC plan or a statement of special educational need:	None
Proprietor:	Oxfordshire Community Churches
Principal:	Mr S Beegoo
Address of school:	New Yatt Road Witney Oxon OX29 6TA
Telephone number:	01993 778463
Email:	office@tkswitney.org.uk

The purpose and scope of the inspection

The main purpose of the inspection is twofold. It is to advise the DfE whether the school continues to meet the requirements for registration, and to determine whether the school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of its association. Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of The Bridge Schools Inspectorate on the Ofsted website.

Information about the school

The King's School is a mixed, non-selective, independent day school, registered with the DfE as having a religious character, and in membership of CST. The Oxfordshire Community Churches (OCC), a group of twelve churches that are all part of the Evangelical Alliance, established the school in 1984. When the school first started, all the pupils came from families that worshipped at one of the OCC churches; however, around 40% of the current pupils are not in this category. Some come from committed Christian families who worship at other churches; others come from families where one or both of the parents is not a Christian.

BSI carried out a full inspection of the school in November 2008, when it was on two sites. Following a major building programme, the secondary pupils moved to the site already occupied by the primary pupils in September 2010. In September 2014, following consent to do so from the DfE, the school widened its age range from 5 – 16 to 3 – 16. At the time of this inspection there were 35 pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) aged 3 to 5; 18 pupils in Key Stage 1 aged 5 to 7; 59 pupils in Key Stage 2 aged 7 to 11; 60 pupils in Key Stage 3 aged 11 to 14; and 32 pupils in Key Stage 4 aged 14 to 16. Pupils who are not yet of compulsory school age attend part-time; in addition one Year 1 pupil, who is being educated at home, also attends part-time.

The school's main aims are stated on the website as follows: 'We value every child, recognising that each is an individual with differing gifts, needs and potential. We work hard to develop Christian character traits such as integrity, humility and compassion so that our students become responsible, caring citizens who will be a positive influence on those around them.'

Evaluation of the school

The school meets its aims very well indeed. Pupils are treated as individuals and the well-planned teaching takes careful account of their different needs, so that they all make good progress in their learning. They also grow in their character and develop excellent attitudes to learning and to life, becoming confident, mature and responsible young people. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The seeds of their success, academically and in their personal qualities, are sown in the EYFS, where the strong emphasis on developing their spoken language, and on their personal, social and emotional skills, lays a very good foundation for their future learning. Throughout the age range, the pupils respond well to the good, and sometimes excellent, teaching that they receive. The curriculum is broad and given coherence by the Christian worldview, shared by the

teachers, that pervades all subjects. However, pupils are not indoctrinated but are strongly encouraged to work out their own beliefs and values. Their understanding is enhanced by the many opportunities they are given for discussion and the widespread expectation from the teachers that they articulate their ideas and think for themselves. The policies and procedures for welfare, health and safety are thorough and effective. Pupils benefit from the well-equipped, purpose-built premises on an attractive site. The school's partnership with parents is very close, keeping them well informed and in return receiving a great deal of support from them. The school is well led and managed and all the regulations are met.

Leadership and Management

The proprietors of the school, the trustees of the OCC, delegate many of their responsibilities to the board of governors that includes two trustees, one of whom chairs the board. The governors carry out their role conscientiously, referring matters to OCC when appropriate and working closely with the senior leaders of the school on strategic issues. The principal, who has been in post since September 2013, is assisted by the head of the secondary department, the head of the primary department and the head of the EYFS unit. This senior leadership team has successfully built on and developed long-standing strengths of the school and brought about improvements where needed. However, the management task that they face is complex since the school's ability to offer a broad curriculum depends on part-time as well as full-time staff, and on many volunteers. At a time when a number of key members of staff are shortly to leave, the next round of appointments will be crucial to the school's continued success. It is also important to ensure that all members of staff have sufficient time to plan together as necessary and to fulfil any management roles that they may have.

The principal, and the chair of governors, who works at another independent school, are fully aware of the changes that have taken place in the Independent School Standards since the beginning of 2015, and have been careful to ensure that the school meets all regulations, including those that are new.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The EYFS is good with some outstanding features. The pupils are happy and enjoy a range of interesting activities. They are confident, enthusiastic, friendly, articulate, and welcoming. They feel safe and secure and clearly enjoy coming to school.

The staff to child ratio exceeds the necessary requirements. The members of staff hold good qualifications: one is a qualified teacher, another has an early years foundation degree and the remaining two have relevant Level 3 qualifications, that, among other things, qualify one of them to lead activities as part of the Forest School.

Careful observations and assessments enable the staff to plan effectively in the long, medium and short term. Teachers record each pupil's experiences in an individual learning journal that highlights their achievement towards the early learning goals, as well as listing 'next steps'. Members of staff use photography well to capture the pupils' achievements. EYFS pupil profiles are submitted to the local authority each

year. The structure of these profiles is used to help track progress towards the early learning goals. The tracking system used is very thorough, highlighting areas for improvement and strengths in each aspect for every child.

The teaching is good and detailed plans effectively match activities to individual pupil's learning styles, abilities, interests and needs. Pupils engage well with their activities and the good pace of the teaching ensures high levels of interest. Members of staff interact skilfully with pupils to promote the development of spoken language and their understanding of the world. There is an effective balance of welfare, care and stimulation. Three pupils have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN); these pupils are well supported and individualised records and reports are regularly updated and reviewed with the support workers and parents.

The curriculum is carefully planned to cover all the areas of learning and to provide a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Pupils have easy access to a wide range of resources of good quality. Educational visits take place throughout the year. Pupils are encouraged to bring healthy packed lunches.

The provision includes an outside play area, which is well equipped for a range of outdoor activities. To enhance their life experiences further, pupils take part in the Forest School: they are taken to a nearby common where they pursue activities such as making shelters, and finding specific species of plants and animals.

The health and safety of pupils is of paramount importance and every effort is made to create a safe and secure environment. All requirements for the EYFS are met. Pupils are well supervised at all times. Informative displays on healthy foods, and on being kind and respectful, contribute to promoting their wellbeing. The Christian ethos is evident. Behaviour is generally excellent as a result of effective strategies for rewarding good behaviour and correcting that which is unacceptable.

Very good relationships exist between staff, pupils and parents and this is a particular strength of the unit. Regular email contact is much appreciated by parents as well as the bulletins keeping families aware of news and events. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress throughout the year: the learning journals are sent home three times a year and parents are asked to complete a questionnaire regarding the provision, which helps staff to evaluate their practice.

Quality of education provided

The curriculum is broad and well planned. There are detailed schemes of work for all year groups and every subject, through which the Christian thread is carefully woven, so that Christian values come through in a natural and appropriate way. Some of the school's curriculum materials, developed over a number of years, have been adopted and adapted by other Christian schools in this country and overseas.

In the primary department, there is a clear and appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy, which helps pupils to develop good skills, particularly in reading. Speaking and listening skills are also well developed, and pupils are given many opportunities to talk, to describe and to discuss. The curriculum includes the

subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as Biblical studies. French is taught in Key Stage 2. Much of the planning is done through a thematic approach, which adds interest for the pupils and enables strong links to be made between subjects.

In the secondary department, the curriculum in Key Stage 3 covers National Curriculum subjects as well as drama and religious studies. Pupils have lessons in two modern foreign languages, French and German. At Key Stage 4, the core subjects taken by all pupils are mathematics, English, science and religious studies. Pupils can then opt for a further three, four or five subjects from a commendably wide choice, for a small school, that includes history, geography, English literature, drama, art, information technology, French and German. They can also opt to take the three separate sciences of physics, chemistry and biology instead of the double award course, taken by the other pupils. All of them have lessons in physical education (PE); some opt to take a GCSE in PE.

Throughout the age range, pupils are given personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) in line with the Christian ethos. In the primary department, much of the PSHEE is delivered through assemblies and through themes. In the secondary department, pupils have a daily half-hour tutor time that is well used to cover a range of PSHEE topics, some of which are also taught in subjects such as English, science and PE. The secondary scheme of work is carefully planned to cover a wide range of relevant issues from a Christian perspective and promotes pupils' self-awareness and personal identity encouraging healthy lifestyles, and respect for public institutions and fundamental British values. An effective tutor time on Parliament and the government was observed in Year 10, which culminated in the pupils praying in their own words for politicians. The school has responded well to the fact that the regulations concerning PSHEE have been broadened in the last revision that came into force in January 2015. The plans for PSHEE ensure that pupils are made aware, in a way that is appropriate to their age, of the protected categories in the Equality Act, encouraging them to show respect for others, in line with the core values of the school.

Secondary pupils are given extensive and helpful guidance about careers, starting in Year 8. Year 9 pupils follow a careers unit that includes other aspects of economic education such as budgeting and tax. Pupils and parents are given very full advice in Year 9, so that options can be carefully chosen in view of each individual pupil's interests, aptitudes, and aspirations. In Year 11, pupils have interviews with an external career consultant, and take part in work experience that is organised in close partnership with their parents. The placements are imaginative and rewarding: for example, one pupil went to Paris to teach English to French children; another went to the Roald Dahl Museum; and a third made a video of the school while placed with a video-graphic company.

The curriculum is enhanced by a range of visits, residential trips and other activities. Pupils in Key Stage 1, as well as in the EYFS, benefit from the Forest School that gives them an exciting experience of outdoor education. During the inspection, the Year 4 pupils visited the numinous site of a Roman villa, as part of their topic, and were impressed to discover that it was built in the early days of Christianity. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 have a residential trip to the Brecon Beacons, while secondary pupils have opportunities to go on trips to France, Germany and Zambia, widening their

cultural horizons. The pupils also benefit from opportunities to take part in the performing arts. At the time of the inspection, all the pupils in Key Stage 2 were rehearsing a production that involved each one of them in acting, singing, playing instruments, or dancing.

The identification of and support for pupils with SEN is very carefully co-ordinated. The primary and secondary special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) work closely together and make sure that all staff who teach SEN pupils are fully aware of their needs. Individual education plans are regularly reviewed with input from parents, as well as from all the teachers involved, and from the pupils themselves. The thorough and well-informed input from the SENCOs is crucial to the success of the school, in which a fifth of the pupils have been identified as having SEN, most with mild to moderate specific learning difficulties, but a few with more complex needs.

The teaching is nearly always good, and sometimes excellent. There is clear evidence of effective differentiation, with lower attaining pupils being given extra support and higher attaining pupils being set additional challenges. A scrutiny of the pupils' work in books confirmed that this feature of the teaching is widespread. Most lessons proceed at a good pace and make good use of the time available, sustaining the pupils' concentration by an appropriate variety of activities and tasks. Throughout the age range, there is a strong emphasis on speaking and listening, and teachers and pupils give each other mutual respect. The pupils are expected to think for themselves and are developing very good attitudes to learning, and the ability to learn independently. Some excellent teaching was observed in the EYFS, and in art, religious studies and science.

In the small number of lessons observed that were no more than satisfactory, the reason why they were not good was often because they were not carefully enough planned, and some activities went on for too long, limiting the pupils' progress and the quality of their learning. On occasion, when more than one member of staff was involved, it was evident that they had not had enough time to plan together. While most lessons are well planned, there is too great a variation in the quality of the lesson planning and in the format used.

All teachers assess the progress of their pupils regularly and thoroughly, and their assessments inform their planning, which is a key factor in the school's success in meeting the needs of pupils across a fairly wide range of attainment, aptitude and ability. Marking in books is generally good and pupils are given encouragement as well as pointers for further improvement. However, there is some variation in the way that teachers assess, set targets and communicate them to pupils. In the excellent art lesson that was observed, on-going assessment was very well used to inform planning, celebrate success and set targets for improvement, providing an exemplar of formative assessment for wider dissemination around the school.

As a result of the good teaching, and of the pupils' excellent attitudes to learning, they reach high standards. Over the last three years, by the time that they leave the primary department all pupils' reading is at least at level 4, and nearly four fifths have reached level 5 or above. While the results in mathematics are not quite as good, they are nevertheless above the national figures, while results for writing are broadly

in line with them. GCSE results over the same period show that nearly half the grades have been at A* or A, and that nearly nine tenths of the grades have been in the A* to C range. For a non-selective school, these attainments represent good achievements.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school successfully achieves its aim of 'sensitively leading the pupils into a growing relationship with God' by providing them with rich opportunities to explore the Christian faith as well as fostering a sense of respect for other faiths.

The development of the pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem is a key strength of the school that is evident throughout the age range. Coupled with their increasingly accurate self-knowledge, this does not make them arrogant; instead they are able to discuss spiritual matters in a mature way, with integrity, humility and compassion. The pupils' outstanding spiritual development is further enhanced by their commitment to prayer, which lies at the heart of school life. Pupils of all ages actively take part in spontaneous prayer times in class assemblies and tutor times as they seek guidance from God to help them make wise choices. For example, pupils in Year 9 were inspired by their tutor to consider God's plans for their own lives in the light of a discussion about the life of Eric Liddell in the film *Chariots of Fire*.

Pupils also benefit from the opportunities provided by staff for them to explore their own ideas and opinions and reach their own conclusions with regard to matters of faith; a view endorsed by a parent who commented that 'Learning about and discussing their faith in a very open and honest way has helped my children to make their own minds up and certainly helped them to be understanding towards other cultures, beliefs and faiths'.

The pupils' moral development is very well fostered and they show an excellent understanding of right from wrong. This is consistently reinforced by staff who model high standards of Christian behaviour, empowering pupils to make wise choices consistent with their faith. In the Year 1 and 2 class assembly the teacher skilfully led pupils in a role play, re-enacting the Bible account of Zacchaeus and exploring the consequences of his transformational encounter with Jesus which was then applied to practical situations in the pupils' lives by discussing moral dilemmas relevant to their own experiences.

The pupils' social development benefits greatly from the experience of learning in such a caring and supportive atmosphere. Their behaviour is excellent and healthy relationships between pupils are formed as a result of which the school is successful in meeting its aim of 'promoting an environment in which all students feel valued and accepted as unique individuals, in the family of the school community'. Pupils act responsibly and are entrusted with a range of duties, which foster their sense of self-worth. The primary 'ambassador programme' is providing Year 6 pupils with the opportunity to show initiative through a desire to serve their peers.

Pupils also make positive contributions to the lives of people in the vicinity of the school. A garden makeover service for local residents was extremely well received

along with painting and decorating, both in people's homes and in community centres. Pupils' insight into and understanding of public institutions is also successfully encouraged in PSHEE. For example, pupils in Year 7 follow a unit on respect for those in authority, including the government, local councils, and the police force.

Pupils' appreciation of their own culture is enhanced through work in art, dance, drama and music providing further excellent opportunities for self-expression. The school successfully develops an appreciation and respect of other cultures through a variety of international links. Pupils take part in trips to France, Germany and Zambia providing opportunities for them to experience at first hand the lives of people in other nations. Senior pupils also learn in detail, and to a high academic standard, about a range of major world religions; their understanding would be further enhanced by more contact with members of the different faiths.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school makes outstanding provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety providing a secure and caring environment. Comprehensive policies and procedures, underpinned by the school's Christian ethos, are carefully and thoroughly implemented, as a result of which pupils are very well looked after and kept safe.

The principal is the designated safeguarding lead and the chair of governors is the designated governor for safeguarding matters. The principal has attended safeguarding training at an appropriate level, organised by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). All members of staff receive regular training, with annual updates on the first inset day of the school year, and they have all signed that they have read the first part of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, the current government guidance. Annual safeguarding audits are carefully undertaken, as required by the LSCB, and so high standards are maintained. The policy is also reviewed annually and approved by the governors. In the response to the questionnaire sent out at the time of the inspection, parents were unanimous in agreeing that their children are safe and well cared for in school.

The school has written a robust policy on preventing extremism and radicalisation, drawing on advice from government. The policy states that 'We will ensure that all of our teaching approaches help our pupils build resilience to extremism and give pupils a positive sense of identity through the development of critical thinking skills. We will ensure that all of our staff are equipped to recognise extremism and are skilled and confident enough to challenge it.' The policy is made known to parents on the website.

Risk assessments are systematically undertaken with robust systems in place to take action when needed; for example all drivers are required to reverse their cars when parking in the school car park to minimise the risk of accidents when leaving. The school also takes its responsibility for e-safety seriously and pupils are made aware of the dangers of using the internet inappropriately. All pupils must sign a safe internet practices pledge. If this promise is not fulfilled then they are not permitted access to computers for a period of time

Behaviour is outstanding throughout the school and pupils' attitudes to their learning are exceptionally positive, which is reflected in their high attendance. The anti-bullying policy is effectively implemented and pupils comment that bullying rarely occurs; they are confident that if they reported any bullying to teachers it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Fire precautions are fully in place and provision for first aid is thorough. Pupils are well supervised and the admission and attendance registers are up to date and completed accurately. The school is committed to promoting equality and diversity, fulfilling its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

All members of staff, and of the proprietorial body, have been carefully checked as required by regulations, and the checks have been entered onto a single central record (SCR) in an appropriate format. In addition, the checks made on all volunteers who work in regulated activities are included on the SCR as required by the most recent government guidance. The school also goes beyond regulatory requirements by making criminal background checks on volunteers who do not come into unsupervised contact with pupils. The principal and the chair of governors have undertaken safer recruitment training and at least one of them is involved in all appointments. The proprietors have recently drawn up a policy on overseas checks that specifies that such checks will be carried out on any new member of staff who has lived or worked abroad in the five years prior to coming to the school.

Premises of and accommodation at schools

In partnership with OCC, the school has worked hard in recent years to raise the money in order to bring all its pupils onto one site. The pupils now benefit from purpose-built accommodation for the whole age range, with classrooms of an appropriate size and with specialist accommodation for art, science and computing. There are good facilities for PE both indoors and outdoors. The outdoor play area is attractive and spacious and includes a large field. The building is maintained in good decorative order and repair. Displays in classrooms and around the school celebrate pupils' work and support learning; many of them also promote the Christian ethos.

The premises are well lit, and suitably ventilated. The new building has under-floor heating which is regulated by thermostat; the old building has heating which is set at a suitable temperature.

Provision of information

The school communicates well with parents and gives them information in a variety of ways. An informative bulletin is emailed to parents each week, and updated information is regularly posted on the notice board in the entrance hall. The website is also a means of information for the parents, though it is currently a little out of date. It is in the process of being redesigned and updated. Reports are sent out twice a year to all parents, giving a full and detailed picture of their children's progress.

All prospective parents are clearly informed about what the school stands for when they apply for a place for their children, even if they themselves are not Christians. The principal gives a talk explaining particulars of the curriculum and what is offered at the school to prospective parents during open days and to all new parents when they join.

In response to the questionnaire sent out at the time of the inspection, parents were overwhelmingly positive. Nearly forty parents attended a meeting with inspectors: they spoke highly of the school and in some cases gave moving testimony of the ways in which their children had been helped. Christian and non-Christian parents at the meeting said that they particularly value the care and education that the school provides and the Christian ethos, which they feel is clearly in evidence but does not indoctrinate.

Manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school has a complaints policy that is placed in the context of its Christian ethos. The policy sets out the procedures, timescales and overall management of complaints and meets all requirements. There were no formal complaints in the last academic year.

Compliance with the regulations

The school meets all of the regulations for registration and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Meeting the expectations of CST

The school's religious ethos continues to meet the expectations of CST.

What the school could do to improve further

As part of future development the school might wish to consider:

- using the best practice in the school, to develop agreed ways of planning lessons, tracking progress and setting targets for pupils.