

BRIDGE SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE¹

INSPECTION REPORT

**INSPECTION CARRIED OUT IN ACCORDANCE WITH
SECTION 162(A)
OF THE
EDUCATION ACT 2002 as amended**

The King's School, Witney

DCSF number: 931/6100

Date of Inspection: 17th-20th November 2008

¹ Bridge Schools Inspectorate (BSI) has been approved by the Secretary of State in the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to carry out inspections in designated independent schools within membership of Christian Schools Trust (CST) or Association of Muslim Schools UK (AMSUK)

SCHOOL DETAILS

Name of school: The King's School	
Address of school: Seniors 12, Wesley Walk Witney Oxon OX28 6ZJ Primary New Yatt Road Witney Oxon OX28 6TA	Number on roll: 163 Full time: Boys: 87 Girls: 76
Telephone number: 01993 709985	Number of pupils with a statement of special educational need:
Email: tks@occ.org.uk	Boys: 1 Girls: 0
Proprietor: Oxfordshire Community Churches	Type of inspection: Section 162(A)
Head teacher: Mr John Ellwood	Dates of inspection: 17 th -20 th November 2008
DCSF number: 931/6100	Lead inspector: Mr Mike Thirkell
Type of school: Independent Christian	Team inspectors: Mr Christopher Schenk Miss Fiona Norcross
Association affiliation: CST	
Age range of pupils: 4-17 years	

The purpose and scope of the inspection

The main purpose of the inspection is twofold. It is to advise the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 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.

Information about the school

The King's School was established in 1984 by the Oxfordshire Community Churches, a group of twelve churches and a member of the Evangelical Alliance, to provide a thoroughly Christian education for its pupils. It is a member of the Christian Schools Trust (CST). The senior school moved to its present site in the historic buildings of a former school near the centre of the town in 1997; the primary school is situated on a spacious site on the outskirts of the town in purpose-built modern buildings. There are currently 163 pupils attending the school between the ages of 4 and 17, of whom 80 attend the primary school, including 9 Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) pupils, and 83 attend the senior school. There are care facilities on the primary site for children between the ages of 2 and 4, but this provision was not part of this inspection. The school's Christian vision and worldview is reflected in the prospectus and parents' handbook: *'for young people to be trained to serve and influence their generation by godly attitudes and actions'*.

Evaluation of the school

This is a successful school where pupils are happy and where the parents overwhelmingly express their satisfaction with both the learning and Christian ethos provided. Teachers work hard and pupils appreciate their support. The very good relationships between teachers and pupils make an important contribution to the positive learning environment throughout the school. Parents and other volunteers serve the school well in a voluntary capacity and play an important role in supporting the work of the school. The school provides a good quality of education. As a result of good teaching, pupils at all levels, from the EYFS and throughout the school, make good progress. The results achieved by pupils in national tests and in GCSE examinations are very good. Their achievements in GCSE examinations have been consistently well above the national average for all schools in England for several years. The school has made a number of improvements since its last inspection and now meets all the regulations required for independent schools in England.

Quality of education

The quality of the curriculum throughout the school is good. The school's aim that *'a world-view that places God at the heart of everything pervades the*

curriculum' is successfully achieved. It responds flexibly to the individual needs and aptitudes of pupils and is carefully planned throughout the school to reflect the school's Christian ethos through the subjects taught. It is structured around five areas through which each pupil is '*prepared for citizenship of God's world*': communication (languages and drama) – relating to God's world; maths and science – order in God's world; humanities – life in God's world; practical skills – creativity and function in God's world and personal development – the individual and community in God's world. The provision is supported by a comprehensive range of policies, procedures and schemes of work in both parts of the school. In addition, there is helpful guidance in relation to curriculum related issues, such as English as an additional language, homework, literacy and numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils at all levels are provided with a suitably broad and balanced curriculum. The range of subjects includes the subjects of the national curriculum in both primary and senior schools. It provides pupils with good opportunities to develop their skills and aptitudes in most aspects of learning, although opportunities for design and technology are constrained by lack of suitable space in the senior school.

In the primary school the core of English, mathematics and science is supported by a range of other subjects, which include Bible Studies, music, art and crafts, history, geography, physical education (PE) and computer skills. Project and topic themes based on Christian perspectives and principles developed by staff, effectively support the aims of the school and are enjoyed by pupils whilst they learn. The senior school is notably successful in meeting its aim of providing a mature foundation in applying Christian principles and values to subjects. In Key Stage 3 (Years 7 - 9), pupils take all subjects of the National Curriculum, as well as home economics and drama. In Key Stage 4 (Years 10 - 11), GCSE courses provide a core curriculum of English, mathematics double science and religious studies (RS), with options available in English literature, history, geography, modern foreign languages, ICT, PE, a third science and art. Take up in modern foreign languages is unusually good in that nearly half of pupils in the current Year 11 take two foreign languages and all pupils are taking at least one foreign language. French is taken by pupils from Year 3.

Personal, social and health education is delivered through the school's own Social, Citizenship, Health, Work, Extra-curricular, Personal and Spiritual (SCHWEPS) programme, which reflects the school's Christian ethos and guiding principles. Careers education is received by pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11. The course in Year 11 is supported by the local Connexions service. All pupils in Year 11 have the benefit of a one week work-experience. The school provides a suitable range of extra-curricular activities, given its size and the distances travelled by pupils to and from school.

The curriculum makes appropriate provision for pupils who experience learning difficulties. Pupils' individual needs are carefully assessed and monitored and information gained from these is used well to inform planning of the next stage of learning. Support, and where necessary, withdrawal from lessons to receive individual help, is appropriate. Pupils who require additional support sometimes drop French during Y7, but may still start German in Y8. Individual education plans for a minority of pupils provide helpful information to guide the support that they receive. Despite the strengths of strategies used to support pupils with learning difficulties, there is more to be done to increase coherence between the two parts of the school.

The quality of teaching is good throughout the school and has a number of outstanding features. It effectively supports the pupils in developing a Christian perspective to life. Pupils show very positive attitudes to learning which are progressively developed as they move through the school. The high quality of relationships between teachers and their pupils contribute significantly to the development of a positive learning environment.

Teachers plan and structure their lessons carefully throughout the school and this, combined with their good understanding of strategies for classroom management and subject expertise, ensures that most lessons proceed at a good pace. The link between the academic content and reflection on Christian themes is notable for its seamlessness in lessons throughout the school. The religious dimension of learning experiences emerges naturally. Pupils are responsive to teachers' high expectations in lessons. Teachers are respected and the pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very positive. The high expectations that teachers have of what pupils can achieve is reflected for example, in the outstanding quality of art displayed throughout the school.

Teachers use questioning very well in both primary and senior parts of the school to encourage pupils to think independently and to use their initiative. In an English lesson in Year 9 on the theme of 'rift and reconciliation', the teacher's questions effectively drew the pupils into considering the emotions of people in the text being studied. In a Year 6 form assembly, the teacher successfully engaged pupils and drew out their responses, individual views and experiences through a well planned activity on the theme of pottery containers.

There are sufficient resources to support teaching and learning. Provision of computers is good throughout the school, although it is looking to ways of improving the use of ICT, for example the introduction of more interactive white boards, or extending the network, as finances allow.

The use of assessment to inform planning, support learning and to monitor pupils' progress is good overall. Assessment is supported by well considered policies. Strategies for assessment are supported by teachers knowing their pupils well throughout the school. The school's procedures for assessment are

good in practice because they identify pupil's individual needs and as a result ensure that all pupils have the right amount of support and challenge. Records of pupils' marks and progress are maintained carefully by teachers. The school has identified the need to further develop assessment strategies and methods of monitoring progress, and a more formal system of tracking pupils' progress is being developed. Marking of pupils' work is regularly and conscientiously undertaken by teachers throughout the school. A high proportion of marking seen in the senior school was of note, because written feedback provided information about what was good about a piece of work and what should be done to improve it further. Approaches to assessment vary between the primary and senior sections of the school. The further development of a whole school assessment policy is cited as a priority for the future.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. In line with the school's vision statement that *'young people should know their God'*, pupils' spiritual development, is extremely well catered for. The ethos and value system of the school is faith-based and impacts on every aspect of school life. Members of staff give very strong consideration to the unique strengths of each pupil and as a result they derive a genuine sense of self-confidence and esteem. All aspects of the curriculum, teaching and classroom practice are interwoven with a clear Christian worldview. The pupils are engaged, enthusiastic and well motivated. Their enjoyment of school is evident in their willingness to participate in the range of curricular activities they encounter.

Pupils are encouraged to make a positive contribution to both the school and the wider community. There is a developing school council and pupils in the primary part of the school carry roles of responsibility enthusiastically. In both the primary and senior parts of the school the pupils' social development is enhanced through participation in local community projects, as well as national and international charity work; recent examples of this are the Christmas Box Appeal and the annual trips to Zambia. The SCHWEPS curriculum is broad based and deals with a variety of issues, encompassing such things as the law, morality, health and relationships. All of these topics are dealt with from a clear Christian perspective and help to equip the pupils well for life within the wider community.

Pupils' behaviour is good; they are polite, respectful and responsive to adults and each other. They understand the need for secure boundaries and value the lead taken by staff. Pupils are able to take responsibility for their own actions and realise that their actions have consequences. Repentance and forgiveness are key features of the discipline policy. Pupils demonstrate a relaxed yet ordered demeanour. There is a strong partnership with parents with respect to discipline and they are encouraged to work alongside members of staff to support pupils' development and understanding.

The pupils have a clear understanding of their own culture, and a growing respect for other cultures. They express a freedom to question their faith without fearing judgement and demonstrate an ability to consider issues from other faith perspectives. Questions and discussions, which arise about other cultures and faiths, are dealt with sensitively by staff and as a result pupils are encouraged to respect and understand different worldviews. A recent series of assemblies in the primary school focused on the culture and faiths of people from other nations. Pupils, in the senior school in particular, have a broad general knowledge of current global issues through the opportunities provided.

Welfare, health and safety of the pupils

Welfare, health and safety are good. Pupils are well cared for and their welfare is promoted and safeguarded effectively in practice. There are full and detailed policies that reflect the values of the school and ensure that all the regulations are met. Good procedures ensure that policies are regularly reviewed and effectively implemented.

Pupils say that they feel safe. The full and helpful anti-bullying policy is closely related to the school's values and alerts staff and pupils to situations where bullying might happen, for example when new pupils first come to the school. As some Year 6 pupils commented: "There's not much bullying. Everyone makes friends. Teachers deal with people being mean to each other."

The school has contributed to and adopted the Oxford Community Churches child protection policy. This provides detailed guidance on what to look out for and what to do if abuse is suspected. The designated child protection officer and her deputy on the primary school site have both had recent appropriate training. All staff are made aware of the policy and have regular training to make sure they keep up to date.

Suitability of the proprietor and staff

All regulations relating to the suitability of proprietors and staff are fully met. Staff are committed Christians and work hard for the children. They are supported by a large number of parents who provide valuable and valued support and partnership. The school is meticulous in checking the suitability of all adults working with the children and records of these checks are maintained in the prescribed manner.

School's premises and accommodation

The school is on two sites providing very good accommodation for primary aged pupils and satisfactory accommodation for the seniors that meet all the requirements.

The primary section of the school is in purpose-built, well-designed premises with a generous amount of space for the present numbers. All classrooms are of a good size and pupils benefit from using additional accommodation such as the art room, music room, ICT room and hall. The grounds are extensive and pleasantly situated. The senior section in the town centre uses a building leased from a nearby church that has been adapted to make very good use of the limited space available. Classrooms are of a suitable size for the groups that use them, and there is specialist accommodation for science, ICT and art. Outside space is limited but it is sensibly used to provide sufficient recreational facilities. PE takes place away from the senior building, on the primary field, local playing fields, or in the town's sports centre, which is within walking distance. Suitable rooms in the nearby church building are rented for examinations and other special events.

Both buildings are kept in good order, though this presents more of a challenge in the seniors than in the primary. There are attractive displays on both sites featuring work in all subjects. The school's Christian ethos is very evident throughout. In the primary section in particular there are some excellent displays celebrating, for example, the uniqueness of the child, the wisdom of God and the attributes of Jesus.

Provision of information for parents, carers and others

The provision of information is clear and comprehensive: all the regulations are met. Much of the required information is contained either within the prospectus or on the website, both of which are available for prospective parents. Further details based on a clear sense of partnership are contained in the parents' handbook and covered at new parents' interviews.

The Christian character of the school is communicated very clearly to parents and prospective parents. The school also makes it clear that education is primarily the responsibility of the parent, with the school working alongside them to provide structure and specialist knowledge. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure that parents are fully informed of issues relating to their child's discipline and progress.

Procedures for handling complaints

The complaints procedures fully meet requirements and are set in a Christian context, opening with an appropriate verse from the Bible. There have been no formal complaints in the last year.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

The provision for the nine Reception pupils in the EYFS is very effective. An Ofsted Early Years inspection in June this year judged the quality and standards to be good. These strengths have been sustained and the implementation of the EYFS has been well managed.

The curriculum is carefully planned to ensure that all the areas of learning are given appropriate attention and to achieve a good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. The Christian perspective, that is an integral part of curricular planning, emphasises the unique nature of every child, and values and nurtures their different gifts. The teaching is good. Teacher-led activities have a high level of challenge and encourage pupils to think for themselves. Child-initiated activities lead to rich and elaborate imaginative play, with the teacher sensitively observing and letting the scenarios develop at times, and intervening to extend the play at others. The religious dimension is skilfully interwoven; for example, a numeracy lesson on the number nine included reference to the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit in a way which was fully appropriate to the age of the pupils.

The records that are kept on the progress of individual pupils are thorough and informative. The teacher uses photographs well to capture the pupils' achievements in their day to day activities and makes perceptive comments that help to track their progress on the EYFS profile towards the early learning goals. Pupils are making good progress. Their personal, social and emotional skills are developing well and so are their speaking and listening skills. They are making a good start with their reading and writing and with their understanding of number.

Pupils have very good relationships with each other and their teacher. They enjoy their learning and their behaviour shows a sense of responsibility for their own safety and for the safety of others. Pupils are well cared for and the welfare requirements of EYFS have been carefully considered and very largely implemented; however, no-one in the school has yet been on paediatric first-aid training. The teacher leads well and manages the valuable contribution of parent volunteers very effectively. They are fully briefed and well deployed. With the help of the local authority, the school has looked carefully at all the requirements of the EYFS, auditing practice in the light of them and making any adjustments necessary so that nearly all of them are met.

Compliance with the regulations

The school meets all of the regulations for registration and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

In order to comply with the welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school must:

- arrange staff training as soon as possible so that there is at least one member of the school's staff who has a current paediatric first-aid certificate, on the premises at all times when EYFS pupils are present.

Meeting the expectations of the Christian Schools Trust (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 the following:

- develop common approaches and practices between the two parts of the school, for example with regard to assessment and the co-ordination of special educational needs.