

The King's School in Macclesfield

# King's

Independent education for 3 to 18 year olds



Learning at King's

## Learning at King's

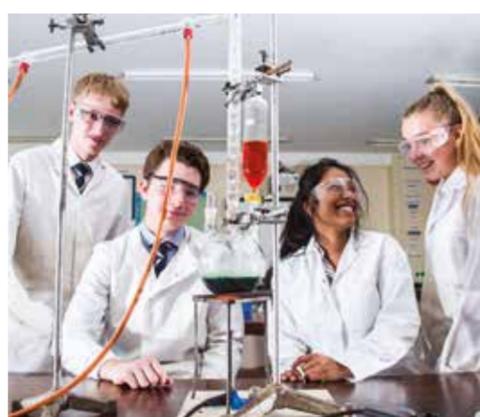
*The King's School may well be one of the oldest schools in the country, but we have our sights set firmly on the future and boast a modern, progressive curriculum.*

From the Infants through to the Sixth Form, our curriculum is firmly focused on developing the learners, workers and leaders of the future.

Our first two aims are to 'challenge our pupils to aspire, work hard and achieve' and 'to develop lively and enquiring minds.'

To achieve this, we have instigated our 'commitment to learning'. This means that all lessons will involve:

- Pupils being challenged and thinking for themselves;
- Activities designed to build curiosity, engagement and understanding;
- Pupils actively investigating and asking searching questions;
- Opportunities for pupils to reflect on what they know, how they are progressing and what they need to do next;
- Pupils working in collaboration;
- Pupils' curiosity enhanced and their understanding assured.



## Infants & Juniors at King's

*Outstanding A level and GCSE results are the product of hard work, determination and a successful learning journey which begins in the infants and juniors; it is here that firm foundations are laid and a sound work ethic is formed.*

## The Learning Challenge Curriculum

In the Infant & Junior Division, we launched our 'Learning Challenge' curriculum in September 2014. It allows dedicated time each day for both English and Maths, which underpins everything that we do, whilst allowing adequate time for in-depth and cross-curricular study of other subjects.

Each half term, children explore an 'enquiry question' to acquire historical, geographical and scientific knowledge, to broaden their experiences, deepen their understanding of the world around them and develop learning skills and resilience.

This bold new teaching approach aims to make learning more engaging with plenty of opportunities for enrichment and independent enquiry.

Enquiry questions are different for each year group and may change to link with major world events, such as the Olympics or key historical events.

Examples of enquiry questions studied in recent years are featured in the box, right.

Whilst each topic may have an obvious geographical or historical 'driver', teachers plan the schemes of work to link with a broad range of subjects including art, design technology,



science, IT, religion and music. For example, Year 1 pupils in their study of China created Chinese puppets, painted Chinese style art, participated in Dragon dancing and tried Chinese food.

These cross-curricular activities lead to greater learner engagement, higher recall of information and, of course, a broader range of fun learning experiences.

## 'Wow' moment

Each enquiry question has its own 'wow' moment, with a specific trip or event helping to bring the topic to life. These include trips to museums, Viking villages, Roman towns or art galleries as well as visiting artists, dancers, speakers, and even the odd visiting dinosaur and farm animal!

## Intelligent School

This approach to learning requires deep thinking and has been described as the curriculum for "intelligent schools".

The pupils look forward to embracing new and exciting enquiry questions each term.

## Enrichment

In addition, pupils enjoy two Enrichment Weeks per year, when normal lessons are suspended and replaced with activities linked to a specific topic. Examples of recent enrichment weeks include: STEM Week, Book Week, Science Week, Art Week and 'Healthy Mind, Body & Spirit' Week.

All infant and junior pupils participate in special, hands-on activities and encounter a range of new experiences.

We also take our more able infants and juniors beyond the 'expected' standard to achieve 'mastery and depth' in literacy and numeracy.

## Infants & Juniors at King's

*'We believe that a King's education lasts a lifetime.'*



## Enquiry questions

### Reception

*What do we know about the dinosaurs that roamed the earth?*



### Year 1

*Can a meerkat live in the North Pole?*

### Year 2

*Would you prefer to be a 7-year-old in 19th Century Macclesfield or today?*

### Year 3

*What was life like in ANCIEN EGYPT?*

### Year 4

*Why were the Romans at Chester?*

### Year 5

*How has our knowledge of the earth and beyond changed over time?*

### Year 6

*Weather: friend or foe?*



*Our Senior curriculum is designed to develop lifelong learning skills and inquisitive pupils who want to explore, investigate, ask questions and find out the answers for themselves.*

### Learning Habits

Alongside all the usual course content that you would expect pupils to learn in their lessons, King's students will also develop crucial life skills or 'Learning Habits' in every lesson. Teachers will deliberately plan to develop these habits in all their lessons. The King's Learning Habits are:

- **Resilience:** emotional toughness in dealing with challenging work and situations.
- **Reasoning:** being careful, methodical and logical thinkers.
- **Questioning:** having enquiring minds which can ask good questions and investigate them, as well as being prepared to question and challenge ideas.
- **Reflecting:** being able to learn from mistakes and reflect on successes to continually improve and plan ahead.
- **Collaborating:** team-work and developing the skills of listening and empathy.

At school, we want our pupils to feel confident enough to take risks and grapple with challenging issues, as well as pose their own questions and feel confident presenting a different view.

At King's, we value questions just as much as answers. We encourage all pupils to go beyond the curriculum, to discuss and explore. In doing so, pupils are already demonstrating life skills sought by universities and in the workplace.

Alongside their timetabled lessons, pupils in key Senior years (typically Years 7 – 9) are also taken off their normal timetable and given 'Challenge Events' to develop specific skills which may be resilience, team working or independent learning.

Recent Challenge Events have included one which was designed to get pupils 'stuck' (i.e. learning what to do when you don't know what to do); an engineering challenge to encourage co-operation and team working and an outdoor learning challenge.

### Critical Thinking

Critical Thinking is part of our curriculum for pupils in Year 7 and 8. Lessons are varied and highly engaging. Unlike other subjects, students are not engaged in learning subject content, but instead work on activities to develop their thinking.

In recent years, pupils have debated thought-provoking subjects such as the monarchy and its role; developed ideas relating to creating their own country; analysed election campaigns and formed their own



*‘It has made me much more inquisitive, I think outside the box more.’*  
– pupil

political parties; read and discussed texts which explore injustice and reflected on injustice in their own lives; debated the benefits of homework; and undertaken projects to save the planet.

The response to our introduction of Critical Thinking and King's Learning Habits has been extremely positive, with great enthusiasm for them shown by staff, pupils and parents. One pupil recently said, "It has made me much more inquisitive. I think outside the box more now."



Scan the QR code with your phone's camera to watch our video

### Independent Learning

Our focus on developing learning habits in our pupils also encourages them to be more independent and to question the knowledge they are presented with, as well as to reflect on their own learning processes. A programme of independent projects allows pupils to work under their own initiative and to go beyond the taught curriculum.

All pupils in Years 7 – 9 are required to complete an independent project each half term. They are set and marked by departments and timetabled alongside pupils' classroom and homework studies.

Topics range from Catapults (Science) and Castles (History) in Year 7 to infectious diseases (Biology) and a topic of the pupil's own choosing in Year 9. These projects are designed to allow pupils to develop their own interests and investigate

academic areas beyond the taught curriculum. They help to develop intellectual curiosity as well as providing pupils with a change from normal routines.

In Year 12, Sixth Form students complete an iGCSE in Global Perspectives alongside their chosen A Level subjects. This qualification continues to develop the learning habits and encourages independent research, reflection and group work: skills that are invaluable as students prepare for university and the workplace. This then leads to the highly-regarded Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in Year 13, where students write a 5,000-word independent project.

A recent audit of King's curriculum by the Teaching & Learning Organisation (TLO) assessed how well our teachers develop independent learning habits and behaviours and how staff enable pupils to take ownership of their own learning.

TLO stated: "In many schools the development of independent learners is a well-intentioned yet largely unfulfilled pipe dream. Not so at King's – initiatives from Year 7 through to the Sixth Form are carefully designed to give learners increasing opportunities to exercise personal initiative and to undertake independent study. Learners talk enthusiastically about these opportunities and the planned development of independent learning sets King's apart from almost all other schools."

Our teachers were complimented on their use of innovative teaching methods to engage, enthuse and fire pupils' imaginations.



## Challenge & Enrichment

*At King's, providing challenge and enriching pupils' learning is very important to us - we are proud of our academic record and are committed to ensuring all our pupils fulfil their potential.*

We have an inclusive approach to challenge and enrichment; we want all our pupils who seek challenge to be able to access it and we encourage them to do just that. We ensure all pupils enjoy the classroom experience where their curiosity is sparked and they are enthused to want to know more.

### Enrichment Provision

Our enrichment provision is coordinated by our Head of Challenge & Enrichment and our Deputy Head (Academic). It is a broad programme of activities, both inside and outside the classroom, to really stretch the most able. Every lesson contains a degree of extension, which can take the format of tasks of increasing difficulty, opportunities for higher order thinking such as evaluation, and leadership roles within the classroom.

We also accept that there are some pupils who are particularly able or gifted in certain areas. Where this is the case, we closely monitor their attainment to ensure

that they are reaching their high potential. Our staff will have high expectations of these pupils in all their class work, homework and assessments. Our bespoke tracking and monitoring systems allow our staff to closely monitor attainment and effort in line with a pupil's ability and we have a number of intervention strategies to ensure that the exceptionally able remain challenged, engaged and motivated in all subjects.

### Within the classroom

All departments in the school offer enrichment provision. Staff plan and deliver lessons which ensure that all pupils are intellectually challenged. Many lessons are enquiry-based, with problems and questions that are open-ended so that more able pupils can be encouraged to push their learning even further and go well beyond the normal confines of a subject/topic. Questioning is used to encourage pupils to apply their knowledge to new areas or to think deeply and broadly about a given subject.

Our teaching styles are varied and highly engaging, so that pupils take an active role in their learning and are encouraged to go beyond the confines on the curriculum. Pupils will be taught not just about their strengths, but also where any weaknesses may lie so that they can be taught how to overcome these. Lessons will involve a variety of different approaches to learning and may take the form of debates, workshops, guest speakers and visits beyond the classroom.



### Online Platform & Resources

Not only do we provide enrichment in school, we also feel that our students should be able to develop their studies independently from home if they wish to push themselves even further. King's offers an online platform for pupils to access enrichment activities at home or using any device with an internet connection.

The platform allows students to choose a subject and select from a wide range of engaging and thought-provoking tasks which, once completed, can be submitted for staff to review. Teachers will mark the work and provide feedback to the pupils, who can work towards achieving their Bronze, Silver and Gold Challenge & Enrichment Award.

### Speakers' Corner

At King's, we also place great emphasis on leadership skills; we are, after all, preparing the leaders of the future. Pupils are encouraged to develop their public speaking skills through our TED-style talks, assemblies, debating and presentations. Visiting speakers, lectures, university-style seminars and visits to universities encourage our pupils to think beyond the confines of the school curriculum.

### Outside the classroom

Many of the academic clubs and societies that take place at lunchtime and after school allow pupils to develop their talents and interests. These include Debating Society, Electronics Club, Chemistry Club, French Film Society, STEM Club, etc.

## Challenge & Enrichment



We regularly enter pupils for a range of national competitions, such as the National Maths Challenges, Maths Olympiad, Cipher Challenge, Linguistics Olympiads, Model United Nations, Latin Challenge, and a variety of writing competitions – and we have had many successes and medals won. These all help to develop pupils' abilities on a bigger platform that extends beyond school.

King's is a member of the 'North West Gifted & Talented' organisation and, as such, we host events each year that offer broader opportunities for not only our most able students, but also those from across the region.

For those who are talented in sport we have a range of highly successful teams (in some cases of world-class standard) and have a high representation in county teams. Our Sports Department is made up of more than 20 highly trained staff, who are often high achieving athletes themselves. Coaching is to a very high standard and pupils are supported with strength & conditioning sessions, nutritional advice and mentoring.

The range of music ensembles,

bands and orchestras means that any talented musicians will be more than catered for. Our Music Scholars are encouraged to get fully involved in the musical life of the school and to perform concerts and recitals. There is a full calendar of performances taking place locally, regionally and internationally, with annual concerts in Chester, Liverpool and Cartmel, plus tours to Wales, Italy, Prague and France.

### Aspiration

In the Sixth Form, our 'Aspire' programme prepares students for university entry with a series of sessions designed to challenge those who wish to apply to

the more competitive universities or

most competitive courses such as law, medicine and veterinary medicine; one of the reasons why we have had such success with Oxbridge offers over recent years. The course is wide-ranging and involves speakers, seminars, mentoring and interview practice relevant to a student's career aspirations.

In short, at King's we want to challenge every pupil at their own level and the most able or talented will find plenty to stir their passions.

*'At King's, we also place great emphasis on leadership skills.'*



**CASE**

Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE) has been delivered through the Science curriculum at King's since 2014. Already, it has been shown to have had a significant impact on improving our pupils' thinking skills.

CASE was developed by King's College London as a way to challenge students and to encourage 'metacognition' – reflection on their own thinking and problem-solving.

Evaluation has shown that CASE has substantial, positive effects on pupils' cognitive growth and on their academic achievement.

Analysis of pupils' cognitive levels at the end of Year 8, after two years following the CASE programme at King's, has shown that their thinking ability levels are well above the national average for this age group.

In fact, the average thinking level for our Year 8 pupils is the level of an average 18-year-old student who hasn't followed CASE.

**Developing a 'growth mindset'**

We want to help children to develop a growth mindset; pupils who realise they can improve with hard work and resilience. What we want to avoid is a fixed mindset; the idea that intelligence is static and can't be improved. Children with fixed mindsets tend to think things should come naturally and quickly or they won't come at all, or that struggling with something means failure. We want to create resilient students who do not give up easily and see the value in persevering with difficult material and tasks. We want questions to be valued as much as answers.

Parents and staff can help influence this by praising a child for hard work and effort, allowing them to make mistakes and realise that failure is not always a bad thing, or by sharing their own experiences of hard work and effort. Sometimes, it might mean ensuring that pupils 'get stuck' and then learn how to deal with that scenario.

By praising children for the process rather than the outcome, we are helping pupils to understand what they have done to be successful and what they need to do to be successful in the future.

If you would like to read some more about the ideas that underpin our curriculum, we would recommend 'Mindset' by Carol Dweck, 'Grit' by Angela Duckworth and 'What's the Point of School?' by Guy Claxton, which also has a chapter dedicated to how parents can help in developing resilient and independent young people.

**Two mindsets**

