ISI Independent Schools Inspectorate

School inspection report

21 to 23 January 2025

The King's School in Macclesfield

Alderley Road

Prestbury

Macclesfield

Cheshire

SK10 4SP

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

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Summary of inspection findings

1. Members of the governing board routinely scrutinise and monitor the school's practices and procedures to assure themselves that the Standards are consistently met. Leaders and governors agree on the school's priorities, and their actions ensure that the school actively promotes the education and wellbeing of pupils.

2. Pupils experience a broad curriculum and achieve well as a result of the high-quality teaching they receive. Leaders ensure that teaching takes account of children's needs and interests from the early years and as pupils progress through the school. Pupils access an extensive and increasing range of co-curricular activities. These help to promote pupils' wellbeing as they develop their wider interests and skills.

3. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL) receive appropriate focused support. Pupils' needs are quickly identified so that the curriculum and teaching can be appropriately adapted to meet their needs.

4. Leaders have put in place a challenging 'compass' programme which incorporates both personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and outdoor education. This successfully captures the imagination of many of the pupils and maximises the use of the school campus. Leaders have not ensured that older pupils, in the senior and sixth form divisions, fully understand the relevance of the programme developing their wider skills and how it can contribute positively to their personal development. This affects some older pupils' engagement in the programme.

5. The school campus provides buildings and grounds that are of high quality and are well maintained. Leaders ensure that risks to pupils are minimised through systematic, detailed health and safety checks, including fire procedures. The security of the school site has been enhanced through a key card entry to main buildings and controlled entrance to classrooms.

6. Pupils are self-motivated and ambitious about their learning and achievement. A wide range of subjects are available to pupils at GCSE and A level, as well as a level 3 BTEC qualification in sport and a level 3 vocational qualification in applied business, which successfully allow pupils to follow their interests and aspirations. Pupils thrive, make good progress and consistently achieve well at GCSE and A level. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

7. Pupils value the numerous opportunities to contribute their ideas and views in school. Leaders are responsive to pupils' requests and suggestions for improvement. Relationships between pupils and adults are positive across the school.

8. Senior leaders understand their safeguarding responsibilities. Staff are well trained. They are confident in using the school's online system to record and report any concerns they have that a pupil may be at risk of harm. Leaders have established close links with local external agencies, and appropriate recruitment checks are carried out to safeguard pupils. Pupils know how to address concerns with adults and understand how to stay safe, including online.

9. Admission and attendance registers are well managed. However, the attendance policy as published on the website did not accurately reflect school practice in the monitoring of school attendance. It was, however, confirmed that the practice of monitoring attendance does meet statutory

requirements. The policy was updated during the course of the inspection to fully reflect the required guidance.

The extent to which the school meets the Standards

- Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance are met.
- Standards relating to the quality of education, training and recreation are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing are met.
- Standards relating to pupils' social and economic education and contribution to society are met.
- Standards relating to safeguarding are met.

Recommended next steps

Leaders should:

- ensure that all statutory guidance relating to attendance is fully implemented
- ensure that older senior pupils and sixth form division pupils fully understand the purpose and relevance of the 'compass' and outdoor education programmes.

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Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

10. The school is well led and managed by an experienced team of senior leaders and governors. Governors are well informed about the school. The governing board delegates to specific sub-committees the gathering and review of information to assure themselves that leaders are fulfilling their responsibilities consistently and effectively.

11. Governors ensure that leaders have the required knowledge and skills and receive appropriate training, including in safeguarding, to keep up to date with current guidance. Effective monitoring and quality assurance systems are used well to ensure that accurate evaluations of school performance are made available to the full governing board. This helps ensure that the Standards are met consistently.

12. Senior leaders have put in place a five-year strategic development plan which considers the school's curricular, co-curricular and pastoral ambitions. This has been achieved through detailed self-evaluation of the school's current practice in fulfilling its aims, including the wellbeing needs of pupils. This helps leaders maintain their focus on the holistic education and skills development of its pupils.

13. Leaders in the early years are well supported by experienced, well-informed staff, which results in a provision that effectively meets the early years requirements. Children are well supported both academically and pastorally, and as a result make a positive start to their education.

14. Senior leaders in both the junior and senior divisions closely check the quality of teaching and learning. They do this through regular classroom visits, promoting a culture of sharing effective practice through staff development. This enables teachers to continually develop their classroom practice so that pupils achieve consistently well.

15. The school meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. An accessibility plan highlights where adjustments are made to meet pupils' needs. The new school site was purposefully designed to improve accessibility. For example, there are wide corridors and disabled and unisex washroom facilities, and there is lift access to all levels of the new building.

16. Leaders liaise and collaborate effectively with external agencies, such as children's services and other local authority support services. Leaders provide information to local authorities in relation to pupils who are in receipt of funding for education, health and care (EHC) plans. Leaders work closely with and maintain a positive relationship with external agencies, including safeguarding partners, to ensure a coordinated approach to safeguarding.

17. Leaders and managers demonstrate a comprehensive and well-coordinated approach to managing risk. The health and safety committee reports regularly to the governing board and an analysis of risks is used effectively to reduce any potential negative impact on pupils' academic and pastoral welfare. Robust risk assessments are in place for pupils accessing the outdoor and woodland environments and for pupils taking part in potentially high-risk activities, such as adventurous training, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and overseas expeditions.

18. An appropriate range of information is published for parents on the school's website. Parents are also able to access reports and assessments and can communicate directly with the school through

the online parent portal. Parents are well informed about the school and their child's attainment, progress and wellbeing.

19. The school has a suitable complaints policy which is implemented consistently. Where formal complaints are received, they are managed effectively through a three-stage process with clear timescales. The number of complaints received is published annually on the school's website. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken and the outcomes of the complaint.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to leadership and management, and governance

20. All the relevant Standards are met.

Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

21. Leaders provide a broad and extensive curriculum that encompasses all the required areas for learning. In the early years there is an increased focus on allowing pupils to explore, create and try new things. This results in children developing confidence and independence and contributes positively to their good progress.

22. In the senior divisions the curriculum ensures that the key areas are covered, including the core subjects, languages and creative subjects. All pupils take at least one humanities subject and one language at GCSE. Leaders' focus on developing the curriculum has led to the introduction of a critical thinking course, focusing on developing independent learning and enquiry.

23. Pupils in the sixth form undertake an extended studies programme in Year 12, including an extended project qualification (EPQ) which is a compulsory subject. The life skills programme for sixth-form pupils is well structured and successfully provides pupils with opportunities to develop skills needed for their future lives, including at university.

24. The creative and aesthetic curriculum includes a wide variety of options, such as dance, drama and design and technology. Pupils' participation in music and music-making is of a high standard and they engage readily in regular school productions. High-quality artwork is noticeable in displays across the school, reflecting pupils' enthusiasm for creative subjects.

25. Teachers are knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. They enhance their teaching through the use of examples that help pupils understand the wider relevance of the subjects that they study. Pupils value the feedback they receive, which enables them to extend their thinking and improve their work. Pupils are encouraged to be ambitious and choose from a wide variety of subjects at GCSE and A level, as well as several BTECs.

26. Teachers plan lessons effectively, including through the relevant use of resources to help pupils deepen their understanding. Pupils make good progress and achieve well across a wide range of subjects.

27. Teachers who are responsible for supporting pupils who have SEND ensure that staff receive relevant guidance and advice to support pupils' needs in lessons. Teachers check pupils' understanding in lessons and ensure that pupils fully understand new concepts and build on what they know. Pupils who have SEND make good progress.

28. All pupils entering the school have a working command of English. However, a number of pupils receive additional support to help them acquire technical and subject-specific language. Pupils who speak EAL develop their English skills well.

29. An effective assessment framework is in place. Leaders closely monitor pupils' progress. Regular assessments inform curriculum design and generate targeted additional support for individual pupils when required. Teachers use assessment information effectively to set ambitious targets for pupils' achievement. School-wide marking policies are implemented consistently and enable pupils to receive consistent and constructive feedback. This ensures that pupils know their strengths and helps them appropriately identify areas for improvement. Leaders ensure that parents receive regular feedback, including about pupils' academic progress and achievement, and their participation in the wider aspects of school life.

30. Pupils across all year groups, including children in the early years, benefit from a wide range of activities, enrichment trips and challenging opportunities, which extends their learning beyond the classroom. Pupils' enthusiasm for sport is evident, as is the high level of team participation. Pupils achieve well in individual and team sporting pursuits, obtaining recognition at county and national level, particularly in cricket. rugby, equestrian and trampolining.

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

31. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

32. Pupils' behaviour is consistently positive. Pupils demonstrate collaboration, respect and attentiveness in lessons. Through drama, physical education (PE), science and music, pupils are seen to work effectively together, demonstrating strong interpersonal skills and a focused approach to learning. Staff ensure that both individual and group wellbeing are maintained.

33. Leaders in the early years promote emotional wellbeing through activities that develop children's self-esteem and confidence. Positive reinforcement such as praise and recognition, for example through 'VIP for the day' and 'writer of the week' initiatives, results in enhancing children's sense of belonging. Children develop confidence and independence in the early years because routines are clear, relationships are positive, and staff have high expectations of children's learning and behaviour.

34. The school's policies are clearly understood by pupils. Leaders create a culture in which praise is routinely given, which supports pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Older pupils often applaud younger pupils' successes in whole-school assemblies. Records of behaviour and incidents of bullying are centrally recorded, and trends identified and addressed, with the assistance of dedicated pupil managers, who are a key part of the pastoral team. Procedures to minimise bullying are successful in that incidents are infrequent, but when they do occur, pastoral support for both victims and perpetrators is effective.

35. Leaders ensure that the school's PE curriculum extends beyond timetabled lessons to make the most of additional opportunities before and after school, and during break times. An extensive range of clubs and societies is on offer for all age groups, and these are well attended by pupils.

36. The availability of an on-site outdoor activity complex for use by all age groups enables an exciting outdoor experience. Pupils enjoy adventure training and develop leadership skills. In the case of older pupils this is further developed through the popular DofE Award scheme in which pupils participate in partnership with other schools.

37. Most pupils participate positively in the school's 'compass' programme which extends opportunities for all pupils to engage in outdoor learning. However, leaders have not ensured that all pupils fully understand the relevance of the programme to help them develop important life skills. Pupils are enthusiastic about their enjoyment of both PE and sport. They appreciate the physical and mental benefits of regular exercise.

38. Since the previous inspection, leaders have ensured that the development of spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is more comprehensively planned as part of the taught curriculum and activity programmes for all age groups. This is complemented by a range of church services, assemblies and tutorials. These help pupils develop their sense of social morality, ethics and spirituality.

39. The extensive school campus and buildings are well maintained. Leaders ensure that relevant health and safety legislation and training plans are carefully adhered to, and that regular maintenance and safety checks are carried out. Suitable medical facilities and first aid procedures are in place to care for all pupils. Fire safety arrangements are externally assessed by suitably qualified professionals and

evacuation drills are completed as required. The security of buildings is maintained through the use of key control cards and the discreet use of CCTV cameras. Pupils feel safe at school.

40. Leaders have carefully planned the deployment of staff so that pupils are effectively supervised and routines embedded throughout the school day. Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained. The school reports pupils who leave and join at non-standard transition points to the local authority in a timely manner. At the time of the visit to the school the attendance policy did not meet statutory requirements, as the actual practice of monitoring attendance was not accurately reflected in the school policy. This was corrected during the course of the inspection and an up-to-date attendance policy was published on the school's website.

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

41. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

42. The school's focus on equality, diversity and inclusion is reinforced through carefully planned curriculum mapping, assemblies and the visitors programme. Within the infant and junior divisions, specific initiatives such as 'think equal' and 'no outsiders' support this work. These efforts, alongside cultural celebrations and 'diversity week', deepen pupils' understanding of respect and tolerance as well as an age-appropriate appreciation of diversity.

43. Children in the early years develop their communication skills. Staff support children well to interact with each other in a supportive and structured way, establishing a foundation for positive social engagement and the development of essential life skills. Leaders ensure that pupils build on these as they move through the school, developing their skills in collaboration, alongside their sense of personal responsibility and respect for each other.

44. Initiatives such as the junior and senior division councils enable pupils to make requests and engage in decision-making. Pupils feel their views are valued and that they can contribute meaningfully to the school community. The school's commitment to social responsibility is evident in its partnership with local and global communities, such as the collaboration with Destiny Gardens School in Kenya, Prestbury Beaumont Care Home and the local foodbank.

45. The school's community involvement programme results in junior and senior pupils developing skills while deepening their understanding of issues such as economic disparity and the importance of community. Through active participation, older pupils are attentive to and responsive to younger pupils in the school, for example, when engaged in mentoring activities.

46. Leaders have thought carefully about the wide range of partnership activities in which senior pupils are engaged beyond the school community. Pupils are actively involved in supporting activities and projects with pupils in neighbouring schools. This involvement in the wider community, and engagement in charity work and social action, promotes in pupils a sense of empathy and responsibility.

47. The school's focus on fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law and mutual respect, ensures that pupils are well-equipped to participate in a democratic society. Programmes such as the Coram programme, mock elections, and the Rights Respecting Schools framework promote a sense of individual responsibility, reinforcing the ability of pupils to navigate societal challenges and contribute positively to their communities.

48. Pupils understand the importance of individual liberty and free speech. Leaders encourage, listen and act upon pupils' views, for example through the work of the school council in further promoting girls' sport in the school. Pupils are respectful of others' viewpoints and have an understanding of public institutions and the rule of law through participation in assemblies, debating, and attending talks from visiting speakers which highlight the importance of listening to and respecting others' viewpoints.

49. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong and take responsibility for their actions. The curriculum offers a broad range of subjects, comprehensively covering PSHE education. The

'compass' lessons in particular enable pupils to develop real-life social skills and these are linked to other curriculum areas, preparing pupils effectively for life in British society.

50. Economic education is woven throughout the curriculum and pastoral time, across all age groups, with practical money-management skills taught to senior pupils, allowing them to gain an appreciation of financial matters. Sixth-form pupils specifically learn budgeting skills and receive financial advice to prepare them for independent living after school.

51. A comprehensive careers advice programme is in place which provides pupils with effective guidance on future pathways. Pupils benefit from talks by recent school leavers about the career paths they are following. Pupils engage in relevant work experience during their holidays and are successful in their applications for a wide range of courses at universities in the UK and overseas. Uptake of apprenticeships has increased, reflecting the breadth of guidance and advice that pupils receive and the school's support to ensure that pupils follow a path of study that equips them well for their future.

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

52. All the relevant Standards are met.

Safeguarding

53. Leaders have in place a well-trained safeguarding team across the school. Members of the safeguarding team readily engage with local agencies for guidance and support so that pupils are given the support they need.

54. Leaders provide consistent support, training and guidance to staff. They ensure that the safeguarding policies and procedures reflect current statutory guidance and are effectively implemented.

55. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputy DSLs are appropriately trained for their roles. They make prompt referrals to the local authority and children services, and to the police, where necessary. A suitably qualified nominated safeguarding governor is part of the governing board.

56. Safeguarding records are well maintained, thorough and show details of how concerns are followed up, including notes of any action taken, decisions reached, and outcomes arrived at. The safeguarding team monitors pupils who may be at risk or in need. This information is reviewed regularly with senior leaders.

57. The safeguarding team works closely with the leaders of provision for pupils who have SEND. This collaborative approach helps to ensure that the needs of pupils are understood and met effectively.

58. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online. There is a suitable system in place to filter and monitor the use of technology. This is tested by the technology department on a regular basis to ensure that pupils work in a safe online environment.

59. Governors maintain effective oversight of the safeguarding policy and procedures. When safeguarding incidents occur, leaders and governors carry out a rigorous review and make changes to any protocols as necessary. The school produces an annual safeguarding report which is reviewed by the governing board, who also ensure that actions are followed up promptly.

60. Pupils know how to report any concerns about abuse or inappropriate behaviour that may arise in and outside of school. They have a wide range of adults in school to whom they can speak if they need to. Electronic reporting systems also enable pupils to alert staff of any concerns or worries.

61. Senior managers are appropriately trained in safer recruitment procedures. Leaders ensure that all required recruitment and pre-appointment checks are carried out for staff, volunteers and governors. A suitable and accurate central record of appointment checks is maintained. Leaders and nominated governing board members check the single central record (SCR) of appointments regularly and ensure that any anomalies are followed up swiftly.

The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

62. All the relevant Standards are met.

School details

School	The King's School in Macclesfield
Department for Education number	895/6007
Registered charity number	1137204
Address	The King's School in Macclesfield Alderley Road Prestbury Macclesfield Cheshire SK10 4SP
Phone number	01625 260000
Email address	mail@kingsmac.co.uk
Website	www.kingsmac.co.uk
Proprietor	The governing body of the Foundation
Chair	Mr Andrew Higginson
Head of Foundation	Mr Jason Slack
Age range	3 to 18
Number of pupils	1330
Date of previous inspection	25 to 28 January 2022

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Information about the school

63. The King School in Macclesfield is a co-educational day school, which was founded in 1502. The school occupies a single site in a rural setting on the outskirts of Macclesfield, having relocated there into new accommodation in 2020. The school is an incorporated charity overseen by a board of governors and has links with the Merchant Taylors' company.

64. The school refers to the different school sections as divisions. The younger pupils form the infant and junior divisions consisting of years 3 to 11, and the older pupils form the senior divisions, consisting of years 11 to 16 and the sixth form.

65. The school has an early years provision which comprises of pre-school children from the age of 3 and Reception children from the age of 4 years. The early years provision works within the school's Infant and Junior division.

66. The school has identified 357 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Five pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

67. English is an additional language for 139 pupils.

68. The school seeks to equip young people with the character and skills necessary to meet the challenges of an ever-changing world. It aims to challenge pupils to work hard, achieve, and to develop lively and enquiring minds. In doing so, the school aspires to foster a friendly, polite and caring community.

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Inspection details

Inspection dates	21 to 23 January 2025

69. A team of eight inspectors visited the school for two and a half days. The on-site inspection was quality assured by a monitor.

70. Inspection activities included:

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

71. The inspection team considered the views of pupils, members of staff and parents who responded to ISI's pre-inspection surveys.

How are association independent schools in England inspected?

- The Department for Education is the regulator for independent schools in England.
- ISI is approved by the Secretary of State for Education to inspect independent schools in England, which are members of associations in membership of the Independent Schools Council.
- ISI inspections report to the Department for Education on the extent to which the statutory Independent School Standards, the EYFS statutory framework requirements, the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools and any other relevant standards are met.
- For more information, please visit **www.isi.net**.

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CAP House, 9-12 Long Lane, London, EC1A 9HA

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