



Arolygiaeth Ei Fawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru
His Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

A report on
Kings Monkton School

Date of inspection: October 2023

by

Estyn, His Majesty's Inspectorate for
Education
and Training in Wales

About Kings Monkton School

Name of provider	Kings Monkton School
Proprietor	Mr Paul Norton Mrs Karen Norton
Local authority	Cardiff Council
Language of the provider	English
Type of school	All-age co-educational independent school
Residential provision?	No
Number of pupils on roll	289
Pupils of statutory school age	250
Date of previous Estyn inspection (if applicable)	01/01/2016
Start date of inspection	16/10/2023
<p>Kings Monkton School is registered with the Welsh Government to provide additional learning provision for pupils with a range of additional learning needs. The structure of the curriculum, the relatively small class sizes, specialist teachers and links with relevant outside agencies positively support the school's ability to provide additional learning provision for pupils with a range of additional learning needs. These include: dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), behaviour, emotional and social difficulties, speech language and communication difficulties, hearing impairment, multi-sensory impairment, visual impairment, physical and medical difficulties, and pupils with autistic spectrum conditions.</p>	

Data reported is sourced from the latest available Pupil Level Annual School Census. These figures may be slightly different to those observed during the inspection. Further information is available from the Welsh Government My Local School website: mylocalschool.gov.wales

a. The term 'additional learning needs' is being used to describe those pupils on the SEN/ALN register of the school.

Overview

Kings Monkton School is an inclusive community with a powerful focus on equality and acceptance. Pupils have a wide range of abilities. A minority of the pupils have an additional learning need and a very few pupils' needs are complex.

Nearly all pupils are proud to belong to Kings Monkton School. They feel that individualism is celebrated as they are encouraged to 'grow into themselves.' Together, pupils and staff create a respectful, purposeful and highly inclusive community, which values happiness and prioritises everyone's well-being.

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe at school, embody tolerance and equality and treat each other with kindness and respect. Staff support new pupils to settle in quickly and they swiftly build strong relationships and establish high levels of trust from pupils.

Staff at Kings Monkton School provide skilful support for all pupils as a result of their strong understanding of individuals' needs and abilities. Throughout the school there is careful and individual consideration of the curriculum on offer. Well-structured planning ensures that pupils build on existing knowledge, understanding and skills to make strong progress as they move through the school. Most pupils feel that the school organises learning in a way that gives them confidence; both the structure of the timetable and their ability to tackle work at their own level within class. Where appropriate, pupils follow bespoke pathways or benefit from effective additional support. Leaders carefully plan these interventions to meet the specific needs of individual pupils and, as a result, they improve their well-being, engagement and learning effectively during their time at the school.

Staff and resources are used creatively and many teachers across the school apply themselves expertly in relation to the ability or needs of pupils. Classrooms and other spaces are calm, purposeful learning environments that enable pupils throughout the school to engage with their learning. When most effective, lessons provide stretch and challenge for all pupils.

Leaders have established a clear school vision, which is understood and applied well by all members of the school community. The operational management of the school is strong and the well-being of the school community is leaders' highest priority. Leaders have identified and addressed successfully relevant areas for improvement across the school. However, quality assurance activities do not always focus closely enough on the impact of teaching on learning and do not always identify where observed practice is not in line with policy.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Compliance with the regulations for registration

Independent school inspections are governed by the Education Act 2002 and related regulations: the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003. These regulations require an independent school to meet an appropriate standard in the following areas:

The quality of education provided by the school

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The suitability of proprietors and staff

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Premises of and boarding accommodation at schools

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The provision of information

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

The manner in which complaints are to be handled

The school meets the regulatory requirements for this standard.

Recommendations

- R1 Refine quality assurance activities to ensure a sharper focus on the impact of school practice on pupil progress
- R2 Ensure that leaders robustly analyse quality assurance information to accurately identify the few areas for improvement

What happens next

Estyn advises the proprietor to amend its current development plan to show what actions the school intends to take in response to the recommendations. It is also advisable to circulate this plan, or a summary of it, to all parents/carers at the school.

Main findings

Learning

Kings Monkton School educates pupils with a wide range of abilities. A minority of the school's pupils have additional learning needs and, for a very few pupils, their needs are complex.

Across the school nearly all pupils make strong progress from their individual starting points because of the highly effective and well-co-ordinated support the school provides. This progress prepares them well for public examinations and accreditations, the next steps in their education or for future employment opportunities. At GCSE and A level, recent attainment has been significantly above national averages.

During their time at the school, nearly all pupils improve their speaking and listening skills effectively. Many pupils respond confidently to teachers' questioning and readily engage in purposeful conversations with visitors. They communicate clearly and thoughtfully express ideas, opinions or explain their understanding. The youngest pupils develop their phonics skills suitably and identify objects, which begin with new sounds. By the end of the primary school, most pupils are using suitably challenging vocabulary, for example when discussing the meaning of unfamiliar words.

The development of secondary school pupils' oracy skills is particularly effective due to the frequency and quality of their interactions in lessons with staff. Older pupils studying for A levels are clear and confident when discussing their learning. They use appropriate, high-level vocabulary to demonstrate their understanding in science, or to fluently outline the plot and characters from a Shakespeare play.

Many pupils make steady progress with their reading skills. They develop their functional skills in line with their ability and are beginning to build an enjoyment of reading for pleasure. For example, in modern foreign language lessons nearly all pupils read aloud with increasing confidence. Nearly all pupils read effectively to locate information or identify important details within a range of texts and learning activities. Most younger pupils can predict what happens next in a story and older pupils read for a range of purposes across different genres. They display sound comprehension skills and reference quotations effectively when writing persuasively, for example when writing about the actions of characters in 'The Hunger Games'.

Across the school, most pupils develop the skills to write accurately in line with their abilities. Younger pupils begin to write short answers in response to learning activities and with helpful scaffolding begin to write at greater length. In the best

examples, the writing of pupils of all ages and abilities is well-structured and expressive, and it successfully engages the reader. Older pupils develop the ability to write for a wider range of purposes, for example when arguing if prison is an effective punishment or when describing the five pillars of Islam. Pupils studying for GCSE and A level write with clarity and are skilled at crafting responses to meet the requirements of these examinations.

Throughout the school, pupils of all abilities approach their mathematical work with confidence and most pupils develop their understanding of key mathematical concepts effectively over time. A few secondary pupils' mathematical skills are highly advanced for their age. For example, pupils in Year 9 successfully solve pairs of complex equations and describe the shape of an equation when it is written algebraically.

Younger pupils confidently build and consolidate secure understanding of place value and the four mathematical operations. By the end of primary school, most pupils successfully apply their numeracy skills in a range of different contexts, for example when adapting a coded program to increase the size of an object. Across the secondary school, pupils' numeracy and mathematical skills are effectively embedded and used to good effect, for example in support of balancing chemical equations or where surface area is discussed in relation to the digestive system in Year 8 science. Older pupils studying for accreditations successfully recall prior learning and implement strategies to help them complete their work.

Through a range of carefully considered activities, the youngest pupils develop their pre-writing, fine and gross motor skills suitably. For example, they thread beads, cut and stick, or catch small bean bags successfully. Furthermore, these pupils develop their wider co-ordination, balance and movement skills during yoga, for example when pupils independently practise a routine of actions and poses. Nearly all pupils build their physical skills appropriately through varied opportunities to explore a range of activities, particularly as part of the PE curriculum and during playtimes. Where pupils may not be able to access these activities, they enthusiastically participate in a worthwhile range of sensory and gymnastic activities that develop their co-ordination and help them to regulate.

Nearly all pupils develop suitable independence skills during their time at school. They arrive at lessons on time, learn how to organise themselves and develop a range of skills to help support their own learning. Throughout the primary school, when given opportunities, pupils collect the correct resources needed for their activity, both for themselves and for their peers. Older pupils in particular develop valuable independent living skills, for example cooking meals such as Thai green curry or tuna and pasta salad. Where appropriate, pupils practise these skills in the community, for example walking to and from a local shop to purchase ingredients for their food and nutrition lessons.

In line with their abilities, nearly all pupils develop their creative skills suitably. For example, pupils recreate fruit and vegetables using watercolours in the style of Alison Cooper. Older pupils, successfully perform monologues portraying emotion whilst in character from classical and modern plays.

Across the school, pupils use digital technology effectively to support their learning, for example to help them write with greater clarity and speed or to create audio recordings of their work.

Across the school, most pupils' thinking skills develop soundly relative to their age and ability. They consider questions carefully and engage maturely with both adults and peers to discuss their views. For example, many pupils in Year 9 use their thinking skills well to consider philosophical arguments for the existence of God, or in A level English, when engaging in high-level analysis of poetry.

Well-being and attitudes to learning

Nearly all pupils feel a strong sense of belonging and are proud to be members of Kings Monkton School. They feel that their individualism is cherished and that they are supported to 'grow into themselves'. Most pupils' attitude to school and to each other is exemplary. As a result, the atmosphere is respectful, purposeful and highly inclusive. Together, pupils and staff create a nurturing community, which values happiness and prioritises everyone's well-being.

In lessons, nearly all pupils behave to the best of their ability and incidences of challenging behaviour are extremely rare. Most pupils understand and respond positively to the school's approaches to promoting positive behaviour and value the school's points system. They know staff award points consistently and fairly and appreciate that their positive contributions are recognised.

Nearly all pupils embody high levels of tolerance, inclusion and equality and most pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. Where appropriate, a very few pupils make highly effective use of the ability to take 'time out'. These pupils exhibit excellent self-management skills and reflect maturely about how to best manage their emotions.

Nearly all pupils feel happy and safe at school. Most new pupils settle into the school quickly and nearly all pupils swiftly build high levels of trust in staff. Pupils know they are well cared for, and trust that they could approach any member of staff with a worry or for support.

Most pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and arrive at each lesson ready to learn. They independently manage themselves, their equipment and if needed any assistive resources successfully. In lessons, most pupils are enthusiastic and highly engaged, and settle quickly to work without prompting. They have a clear understanding of classroom routines and a strong work ethic, and sustain concentration for an extended period. Most pupils are articulate and contribute to discussions effectively. Many pupils are keen to ask and answer questions to extend their learning. Throughout the school, pupils transition between activities smoothly and willingly, most notably in the younger years.

Most pupils feel supported by the school's approach to setting classes in certain subjects and believe that this ensures that they are always presented with opportunities to learn at their own level. Equally, they feel that the length of lessons helps to focus their attention sharply and that their ability to choose from a range of tasks within lessons is helpful as this allows them to stretch themselves as their

confidence builds. Throughout the school, pupils develop perseverance and resilience in line with their needs and abilities effectively. Nearly all pupils respond positively to the effective verbal feedback from teachers.

Pupils value the plentiful and varied activities that enrich the curriculum and engage well with a wide range of popular physical and thematic after-school activities. There are meaningful and well-established leadership roles within the school, such as anti-bullying ambassadors and the head pupils. Through these roles and the work of the pupil council, pupils successfully build strong relationships with leaders and are able to positively influence the work of the school. Furthermore, pupils regularly complete surveys that feed back their holistic experience of school life or their views on particular initiatives such as reading for pleasure.

Teaching and learning experiences

At Kings Monkton School, staff know pupils extremely well and build strong relationships founded on trust, mutual respect and understanding of individuals' needs, context and abilities. As a result, classrooms and other spaces are calm, purposeful learning environments that enable pupils throughout the school to engage with their learning and make strong progress.

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum, which meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations, 2003. In nearly all areas, the curriculum is underpinned by detailed and effective planning. Well-structured and resourced schemes of learning and assessment ensure that pupils build on existing knowledge, understanding and skills. As a result, nearly all pupils make strong progress as they move through the school.

The school is highly flexible in adapting the curriculum offer to best match the needs, interests and ambitions of all pupils. Courses and programmes of study are tailored to individuals at all levels. Younger pupils are given flexibility in their timetable to provide space and time for appropriate support and independent study. Pupils and parents work in partnership with the school to choose courses leading to accredited qualifications. On several occasions, the school has established new courses such as performing arts and ASDAN in response to pupil demand. These approaches allow the school to maximise opportunity and attainment. The flexibility in the curriculum offer is supported by strategic and creative deployment of staff and resources to ensure effective, responsive provision. Secondary subject specialist teachers deliver a wide range of subjects within the primary school, which strengthens provision, reinforces consistency across the school, and aids transition.

The school enhances and strengthens its curriculum with a range of well-chosen off-site activities, including PE, and with curriculum-linked trips, for example a trip to the battlefields of WW1 linked to secondary history and a trip to the Bannau Brycheiniog linked to the primary school 'rivers and mountains' topic.

The school delivers an effective personal, social and emotional curriculum (PSE), which supports the development of pupils' social and emotional skills effectively. This enables them to understand how to make healthy lifestyle choices and helps them to understand the impact of such choices on their health and well-being.

Teachers across the school have strong subject knowledge relevant to the courses they deliver. In the primary school, this expertise is combined with extensive knowledge of teaching strategies in core areas such as reading, providing opportunities for pupils to make strong and rapid progress. In the secondary school, subject specialists are also experts on the precise demands of examination courses and specifications, which they integrate into planning and teaching. As a result, older pupils approach examinations and qualifications with confidence.

Across the school, teachers are highly effective language models. They skilfully and sensitively adapt their instructions and feedback to the abilities, needs and contexts of individual pupils. They encourage use of appropriate and relevant technical vocabulary.

Throughout the school, teachers' questioning is highly developed and effective in allowing pupils to construct and develop their understanding. Their questioning is patient and supportive, and fosters independent thought. Teachers encourage and value pupils' curiosity. In response, pupils feel safe to take risks in their learning and readily engage in constructive dialogue with both peers and adults.

Where teaching is most effective, planned resources, tasks and activities are carefully constructed to provide stretch and challenge for all pupils. During the best lessons, teachers adapt their practice in response to pupil feedback. Additionally, in many lessons, pupils are able to select their own tasks based on confidence and ability. However, in a few lessons teachers' over-structuring of activities results in missed opportunities for independent work and limits their ability to challenge pupils.

Across the school, verbal feedback is highly effective in driving progress, and pupils of all ages are adept at responding to this. Most teachers' written feedback is concise, individualised, and clearly linked to specific learning objectives. Combined with dedicated improvement and reflection time, this enables progress and gives pupils a sense of ownership and agency.

Throughout the school, parents receive regular, informative reports. These give detailed accounts of the progress made by pupils and clearly set out next steps for their learning. The school uses its digital platforms in a highly effective way to provide access to key documents including reports and to keep parents and pupils informed about their progress.

Care, support and guidance

Kings Monkton School has developed a highly positive and inclusive culture. Staff are warm and welcoming to their pupils and support them to develop as confident individuals. The school recognises and celebrates difference. As a result, most pupils are happy to come to school and engage positively with their learning.

Staff support pupils to settle quickly when they join the school. They swiftly build highly positive working relationships with their pupils, particularly when based on a strong knowledge of their additional learning, social and emotional needs. Staff provide skilful support to meet these needs, ensuring that pupils feel safe and happy and are able to access their learning, for example recognising and responding to the need for pupils to talk about their feelings.

The school provides effective support for the social and emotional needs of pupils, for example providing pupils with a quiet space to spend time with their peers during lunchtimes. Pupils value the opportunity to have a discrete space where they feel safe and calm.

The school has developed valuable processes for supporting pupils with a range of additional learning needs. Staff develop beneficial documentation, such as the pupil passport, which is used effectively by the wider staff team to meet pupil needs consistently throughout the school day. Where then required, staff provide a range of helpful interventions to support pupils' development in areas such as their fine motor skills or communication. Leaders carefully plan these interventions to meet the specific needs of individual pupils. As a result, most of these pupils make strong progress in their well-being, engagement and learning during their time at the school.

Leaders have developed effective cooperative relationships with a wide range of partners to support pupils with additional learning needs (ALN). These include specialist staff and the local authority. Leaders use these links to ensure that pupils get the guidance and support they need, for example using feedback from behavioural specialists to support a new pupil to settle in at the school.

Leaders monitor a valuable range of important information about pupils, such as attendance and behaviour. Leaders have high expectations of pupil attendance and engagement. They respond appropriately to pupil absence and encourage good attendance. However, a few pupils do not attend school well enough.

The school provides pupils with a wide range of opportunities to take on responsibility, for example through the pupil council, or when becoming digital leaders, reading ambassadors or play leaders. Pupils value these opportunities to take on their roles and speak of the impact with pride.

There is a powerful focus on equality and acceptance across the wider school community. For example, when learning about Black history month in registration time or talking about role models in assembly. The school provides a beneficial range of experiences for pupils to develop their spiritual, moral and social understanding well. Staff place a high value on promoting human rights and the rights of the child. For example, the 'Pride alliance' recently developed a range of signage celebrating different types of family.

Staff support pupils well to develop the important knowledge and skills to stay safe and healthy, for example when learning how to manage their own mental health or cook healthy meals. However, the school provides only a few healthy options at break and lunch time.

The school provides opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of extra-curricular activities including celebrating the arts and performance, for example cipher club and karate club, the cabaret evening or the school performance of 'Little Shop of Horrors'.

Leaders are developing a sound culture of safeguarding at the school. They are responsive to local and national trends in this area, for example addressing the prevalence of misogyny on social media. Leaders provide all staff with regular

training in this important area, including safeguarding and radicalisation. There is a well-understood system to report safeguarding concerns relating to pupils or staff. The school has thorough safer recruitment procedures and ensures that all new members of staff receive appropriate training. A few issues relating to school policy were raised with the school and these were addressed during the inspection.

Leadership and management

The principal and vice principal have worked together tirelessly to ensure that the future of the school is secure since their management buyout in 2019. They responded to the COVID-19 pandemic swiftly and boldly and continue to adapt to the challenges the pandemic has brought to the school, pupils, and their families.

At the heart of all that the school does is the aim of leaders to ensure that all pupils are safe, secure and happy. As a result, nearly all pupils have high levels of well-being, feeling valued and well supported. In addition, leaders place a high priority on the well-being of staff, providing professional and personal support; this is a strength of the school.

The principal provides strong, compassionate, responsive leadership. They set a clear direction for the work of the school and have high expectations of staff and pupils alike. The school vision to 'be the best you can be' is understood and applied well by all members of the school community.

Leaders have a clear vision for the curriculum and its delivery. They have established a flexible, responsive curriculum that is taught in a calm learning environment and meets the needs of individual pupils. This has led to the strong progress achieved by nearly all pupils.

Leaders' operational management of the school is strong. Across the school all staff, both teaching and non-teaching, have clear roles and responsibilities and everyone understands how they contribute to the well-being and success of pupils. There is a useful range of regular, recorded meetings through which staff are kept aware of events in the school and of any concerns regarding individual pupils.

Leaders have identified relevant areas for improvement across the school, for example the recent focus on promoting reading for pleasure. To ensure school improvement and maintain quality of provision, leaders carry out a suitable programme of monitoring activities. Annual faculty reviews include lesson observations and book reviews. However, these activities do not always focus closely enough on the impact of teaching on learning and do not always identify where observed practice is not in line with policy. In addition, the information collected is not always analysed robustly. Consequently, this has led to inconsistency between school practice and policy in a few areas of the school's work.

School performance management processes are appropriate. Staff professional learning objectives are identified and related to school improvement priorities or areas of professional interest. Staff have access to a range of useful external training. For example, staff access courses to support them in the delivery of GCSE and A level examinations, or to learn about teaching strategies that address

difficulties related to literacy. In addition, internal training is provided when a whole-school priority is identified; for example, training in the teaching of phonics.

Leaders have developed highly effective working relationships with parents, who are nearly all positive about the work of the school. In addition, the school works with a range of external partners for the benefit of both pupils and the wider community. For example, these partnerships offer pupils apprenticeships and additional music activities, as well as Mandarin lessons, which are also available to the wider community.

The proprietors have established a beneficial academic board. The terms of reference of this group are very clearly defined and the role of the board is primarily to formulate policy and give direction to the school. The membership of the group reflects both the staff and parent body, and members provide a useful range of expertise from both education and industry. The group meets regularly and discusses issues such as pupil numbers, curriculum changes and staffing. The group acts as a useful 'sounding board' when the school considers changes, such as restructuring the school day.

The school meets all of the Independent School Standards (Wales) Regulations 2003.

Evidence base of the report

Before an inspection, inspectors:

- analyse the outcomes from parent/carer and pupil questionnaires and consider the views of teachers and support staff through their questionnaire responses

During an inspection, inspectors normally:

- hold a meeting with parents/carers to hear their views on the school and its effectiveness
- meet the headteacher, governors/proprietor(s), leaders and individual teachers to evaluate the impact of the school's work
- meet pupils to discuss their work and to gain their views about various aspects of their school
- meet groups of pupils in leadership roles, such as representatives from the school council and eco-committee
- visit lessons and undertake a variety of learning walks to observe pupils learning
- look closely at the school's self-evaluation processes
- consider the school's improvement plan and look at evidence to show how well the school had taken forward planned improvements
- scrutinise a range of school documents, including information on pupil assessment and progress, records of meetings of staff and the governing body (where appropriate), information on pupils' well-being, including the safeguarding of pupils, and records of staff training and professional development

After the on-site inspection and before the publication of the report, Estyn:

- review the findings of the inspection alongside the supporting evidence from the inspection team in order to validate, moderate and ensure the quality of the inspection

Copies of the report

Copies of this report are available from the school and from the Estyn website ([Estyn Website](#))

The report was produced in accordance with section 163 of the Education Act 2002. The main purpose of inspection under this section is to report on compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2003. In schools that provide non-maintained nursery education, this report also satisfies the requirements of Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

Every possible care has been taken to ensure that the information in this document is accurate at the time of publication. Any enquiries or comments regarding this document/publication should be addressed to:

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