



King's Ely ISI Inspection Report

November 2021



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

Following the whole school inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) from 9-12 November 2021, I have great pleasure in sharing with you the report from the ISI inspection.

In short, King's Ely achieved the highest grading possible in every category inspected and was judged to meet or exceed all the regulatory standards for independent day and boarding schools.

This is an exceptional achievement for the school and one we are delighted to be sharing with the whole King's Ely community.



King's Ely ISI Inspection report: November 2021

Inspection framework: How the School was inspected

The School underwent an Educational Quality Inspection (EQI) which also incorporates a Focused Compliance Inspection (FCI). We were given 24 hours' notice of the inspection, the first day of which (Tuesday) was conducted online before we welcomed the inspection team in from Wednesday until Friday. Verbal feedback was given just before the team departed and the written report was received in mid-December.

1. Educational Quality Inspection (EQI):

The Educational Quality Inspection requires the team to consider two key aspects: the pupils' academic and other achievement and the pupils' personal development.

On each aspect the school is graded on a scale of 1 to 4 as follows:

- 1 **Excellent**
- 2 **Good**
- 3 **Satisfactory**
- 4 **Unsatisfactory.**

The Early Years Foundation stage is now included within the whole school inspection and not graded separately.

When considering each aspect, the inspection team scrutinise the school thoroughly by means of:

- A confidential pupil questionnaire given to all pupils from Year 5 to Year 13, completed by almost 500.
- A confidential parental questionnaire: thank you to all of the parents (505) who took the time to provide feedback.
- A confidential staff questionnaire.
- A significant number of lesson and activity observations across all three sections of the School.
- Interviews with a large selection of pupils chosen at random by the inspectors from across the whole school, and a further selection chosen by us. The inspection team were hugely complimentary about all the pupils they spoke to.
- Interviews with a number of staff members covering a broad range of roles within the School
- Work scrutinies of a broad range of pupil work across the School
- Consideration of school documentation including policies, risk assessments, staff personnel files and other elements to test the effectiveness of school compliance.

“Pupils achieve highly because of the excellent leadership of academic provision”



a) Pupils' Academic and Other Achievements:

Throughout the School, Pupils' academic and other achievements was graded as **Excellent**, the highest grade achievable

Key findings were:

- Pupils throughout the school make **excellent** progress across all areas of learning and at all age and ability ranges
- Pupils' attitudes and study skills are **excellent**
- Pupil demonstrate and apply advanced information and communication technology (ICT) skills which were enhanced during lockdown
- Pupils are **excellent**, insightful and thoughtful communicators

The inspection scrutinises the following area when considering pupils' achievements:

"Pupils' work throughout the school is beyond and well beyond age-related expectations".



"Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) reach excellent standards of numeracy and literacy making swift progress at an early age."



A1 – Exam results and change in attainment over time:

the change in their attainment levels over time, including evidence from externally standardised tests and examination results

A2 – Knowledge, skills and understanding:

the development of their knowledge, understanding and skills across the areas of learning (linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education)

A3 – Communication:

the development of their competence in communication (speaking, listening, reading and writing) and its application to other areas of learning

A4 – Numeracy:

the development of their competence in numeracy and the application of their mathematical knowledge and skills to other areas of learning

A5 – ICT:

the development of their competence in ICT and its application to other areas of learning

A6 – Study Skills:

the development of their study skills, including the ability to draw upon a suitably wide range of sources and to develop higher-order skills such as the ability to analyse, hypothesise and synthesise

A7 – Academic and other achievements:

their achievements in scholarships and competitions, other academic distinctions and success in sport, performing and other arts and other extra-curricular activities

A8 – Attitudes:

their attitudes towards learning, including their ability to demonstrate initiative and independence, their willingness to work collaboratively and to take leadership in their learning.



"Junior School pupils are excellent learners and demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively... and achieve high levels of attainment"

b) Pupils' Personal Development

Pupils' Personal development was graded as **Excellent**, the highest grade achievable.

Key findings were:

- Pupils social development and collaboration skills are excellent, and relationships with each other are warm and positive.
- Pupils show a keen appreciation, respect and support for the diverse nature of their community.
- Pupils' moral understanding is highly developed, and they readily take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- The spirituality of the pupils is very well developed, and pupils show mature appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.

The inspection scrutinises the following areas when considering the pupils' personal development:



“Pupils contribute extremely positively and willingly to the school and local communities and to society more broadly”



“Pupils' social skills are highly developed, and interaction with others is of high quality”

P1 – Self-understanding:

how well they develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and resilience, including an understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance and how well prepared they are for the next stage of their lives.

P2 – Decision-making:

how well they make decisions and understand them to be important determinants of their success and well-being.

P3 – Spiritual understanding:

their spiritual understanding and appreciation of non-material aspects of life, whether religious, philosophical or other.

P4 – Moral understanding and responsibility for own behaviour:

how well they distinguish right from wrong, understand and respect systems of rules and laws and accept responsibility for their own behaviour, including towards others.

P5 – Social development and collaboration:

Social awareness and ability to work effectively with others, including to solve problems and achieve common goals.

P6 – Contribution to others, the school and the community:

how well they fulfil responsibilities to others and contribute positively to the lives of others within school, including in boarding, the local community and wider society.

P7 – Respecting diversity and cultural understanding:

how well they respect and value diversity within society, appreciate their own and other cultures and demonstrate sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds and traditions.

P8 – Staying safe and keeping healthy:

knowing how to stay safe and understanding how to be physically and mentally healthy, particularly in terms of diet, exercise and a balanced lifestyle.

What they said...

“Pupils are deeply engaged in the learning process, and a very large majority of pupils and parents commented on the help and encouragement they receive from supportive, experienced and dedicated staff when they experience problems with their work.”



“The strong culture of trust seen to exist throughout the EYFS and Junior School with constructive relationships across all year groups enables open reflective discussions between pupils and staff to occur in many lessons”.

“Praise and encouragement are used throughout the school to great effect and have a clear impact on pupils’ self-esteem”.



“Pupils are culturally aware and show a keen appreciation, respect and support for the diverse nature of their school community and genuinely welcome the difference and richness this brings”.



2. Focused Compliance Inspection (FCI):

Regulatory compliance inspections report on the School's compliance with the Independent Schools Standards Regulations, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) regulations and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding. The School is thoroughly investigated for compliance in eight areas:

King's Ely was **FULLY COMPLIANT** with all of the regulations above and received a clean bill of health.

Part 1: Quality of Education Provided

Part 2: Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

Part 3: Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

Part 4: Suitability of Staff, Supply Staff and Proprietors

Part 5: Premises of and Accommodation at Schools

Part 6: Provision of Information

Part 7: Manner in which Complaints are Handled

Part 8: Quality of Leadership and Management

Recommendations:

It is always the case that schools are given at least one recommendation, and King's has been given only one:

In the context of the excellent outcomes, the School may wish to consider enhancing pupils' preparation for the next stage of their lives through more effective advice about subject choices and careers provision.



The Next Steps

While we are really delighted how well the inspectors came to understand and appreciate our school and with the results of the inspection, we know we are not perfect and will not rest on our laurels. Instead, the report offers us a platform to clarify our aims and strive further to provide the most exceptional education we can for all of our children.

The Senior Leadership Team has spent some time looking at the results from the three questionnaires as well as the inspectors' oral and written feedback to identify strengths and weaknesses and build them into our improvement plan.

In the normal course of events we will not be inspected by ISI again for a few years; however, we will continue to ask questions and work with parents and pupils to ensure that King's Ely continues to do the very best for our children into the future.

I hope that our parents and friends will be as delighted as we are with the inspection and will join me in congratulating our whole community for their part in it. In particular, I would like to thank our exceptional staff team for their dedication and hard work before, during and since the inspection, and their commitment and passion for our School.

John Attwater
Principal

December 2021





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**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports
For Schools with Residential Provision**

King's School, Ely

November 2021

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School's Details

School	King's School, Ely			
DfE number	873/6005			
Registered charity number	802427			
Address	King's School, Ely Barton Square Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 4DB			
Telephone number	01353 660700			
Email address	reception@kingsely.org			
Principal	Mr John Attwater			
Chair of governors	Mr David Day			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	1031			
	Day pupils	856	Boarders	175
	EYFS	67	Juniors	231
	Seniors	539	Sixth Form	194
Inspection dates	9 to 12 November 2021			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 King's School, Ely, is an independent co-educational day and boarding school. It is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. The school was founded over one thousand years ago to educate the male choristers of the worshipping community of Ely. Becoming co-educational in 1970, the school admits pupils of all faiths and none. Pupils enter the Nursery after their second birthday and progress to King's Ely Acremont for Reception. King's Ely Junior accepts pupils from the age of seven to thirteen years. Pupils subsequently transfer to King's Ely Senior until the age of eighteen years. Boarders are accommodated in seven separate boarding houses, three for male pupils, three for female pupils and one is mixed.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, a new principal was appointed in August 2019 and a new chair of governors took office in June 2020. The Nursery de-registered from Ofsted in 2019. Boarding has been rearranged by separating those in the sixth form from those in Years 9 to 11.
- 1.3 During the period March to August 2020, the whole school remained open only for children of key workers. During this period of closure, the school provided remote learning materials for all other pupils.
- 1.4 No boarders remained on site.
- 1.5 In the interests of infection control during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, inspection evidence was gathered partly remotely and partly on site to reduce contact within the school setting.
- 1.6 In line with the direction given by the Department for Education (DfE) at the time, no evaluation has been made of the nature or effectiveness of any provision made during the period March to August 2020, including its impact on pupils' learning, achievement or personal development. Any concerns relating to pupils' welfare during this period which directly relate to measures implemented by the school have been considered.
- 1.7 During the lockdown period of January to March 2021, all pupils other than the children of key workers or vulnerable pupils and some boarders received remote learning provision at home, or with guardians in the case of overseas boarders.
- 1.8 In 2020 and 2021, public examinations were not held. For pupils who would have been expected to take these examinations, centre-assessed and teacher-assessed grades were awarded. Since 2020, EYFS profiles have not been externally moderated.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.9 The school aims to promote a culture of integrity and trust in which: childhood and youth are honoured; people of all races, faiths and backgrounds are respected and valued; life skills are developed; personal and social responsibility are promoted; and both creativity and independence of mind are fostered so that life can be embraced and lived to the full.

About the pupils

- 1.10 Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures, mostly from professional families within East Anglia, but also from further afield and abroad. Data provided by the school indicate that the ability of pupils of all ages is above the national average. The number of pupils identified by the school as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 160, with 87 pupils receiving additional support from the school for their needs. There is one pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. One hundred and thirty-five pupils have English as an additional language,

72 of whom receive additional support. Pupils identified as the most able and those with particular talents may have their curriculum modified or enhanced.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the National Minimum Standards for Boarding ('boarding NMS'), where applicable. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework. Additionally, inspections report on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY. The FOCUSED COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the standards and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

COVID-19: Inspection judgements do not cover the period March to August 2020 inclusive.

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.**

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the junior school, the school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2019 to 2021, performance has confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2019 to 2021 have confirmed that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 Pupils receive relationships education in the junior school and relationships and sex education in the senior school, except in so far as they are lawfully excused. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.7 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.8 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.9 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.10 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.11 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.12 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.13 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.14 **The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.15 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.16 **The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.17 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.18 **The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.19 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.20 **The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.21 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.22 **The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.**

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

The headline judgements apply one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils make excellent progress in their learning throughout the school.
- Pupils' attitudes and study skills are excellent.
- Pupils demonstrate and apply advanced information and communication technology (ICT) skills which were enhanced during lockdown.
- Pupils are excellent, insightful, and thoughtful communicators.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- The spirituality of the pupils is very well developed, and pupils show mature appreciation of the non-material aspects of life.
- Pupils' moral understanding is highly developed, and they readily take responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Pupils show a keen appreciation, respect, and support for the diverse nature of their community.
- Pupils' social development and collaboration skills are excellent, and relationships with each other are warm and positive.

Recommendation

3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school may wish to consider:

- Enhancing pupils' preparation for the next stage of their lives through more effective advice about subject choice and careers provision.

The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

3.5 Analysis of data, lesson observations and work scrutiny show that pupils throughout the school make excellent progress across all areas of learning and at all age and ability ranges. Excellent identification of individual targets assists pupils focus upon key areas. Intervention strategies are put in place if needed. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) make good progress in line with their ability. This is enabled by dedicated staff, detailed knowledge of individual pupils and strong, mutually respectful relationships.

3.6 Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) reach excellent standards of numeracy and literacy making swift progress at an early stage. Junior school pupils are excellent learners and demonstrate

the ability to work collaboratively and to develop resilience and achieve high levels of attainment. They work on their own with confidence. For example, in a mathematics lessons they confidently made calculations of load and effort to explain why a wheelbarrow is efficient.

- 3.7 In the years 2018 and 2019, results in external examinations at A level, IGCSE and GCSE were good, being above national averages. Academic outcomes across all subjects are good. The centre-assessed grades for 2020 and teacher assessed grades for 2021 show pupils' good attainment has risen still further, with nearly three-quarters of A-level results at A* to A, and at both IGCSE and GCSE, over three-fifths at grades 7 to 9. The school and pupils judge that this is because of the very strong provision the school made for on-line learning during the periods pupil were at home.
- 3.8 Most pupils gain their first-choice places at universities with high entry requirements or equivalent institutions in specific fields. Pupils achieve highly because of the excellent leadership of academic provision. Pupils are deeply engaged in the learning process, and a very large majority of pupils and parents commented on the help and encouragement they receive from supportive, experienced and dedicated staff when they experience problems with their work.
- 3.9 The development of knowledge, skills and understanding is excellent in relation to pupils' starting points. Pupils' work throughout the school is of a standard beyond and well beyond age-related expectations. Reception children confidently demonstrated ability to contextualise complex vocabulary such as 'sacrifice' and 'overcast' and use sentences to demonstrate this. Younger pupils in an English lesson identified phrases from their set text and described how these phrases affected the emotions of the reader and, in an art lesson, displayed a deep appreciation of the Japanese art form Notan. GCSE pupils demonstrate extremely high levels of understanding of human and social issues as in a geography lesson successfully completing a sophisticated analysis on climate change data.
- 3.10 Boarders commented in their discussions with the inspectors that their tutors' presence in the boarding houses during evening duties, teachers' availability during the school day and evening access to the library were factors contributing to their improvement in knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 3.11 Pupils throughout the school are extremely confident and articulate speakers in the variety of settings the school provides for public speaking such as drama productions, debating clubs, addressing assemblies, and reading in the cathedral. They listen to each other with empathy, engagement, and sensitivity. Pupils willingly contribute to discussions unafraid of expressing differing viewpoints and do so effectively and constructively enabling further dialogue. Peer role-modelling has been effective in developing the communication skills of the international pupils who faced initial challenges with initiating conversations. Older pupils in a modern foreign languages (MFL) lesson spoke extremely competently in their target language when discussing the use of synonyms. Younger pupils communicate effectively and without hesitation when they need assistance with their work. Work seen by the inspectors was extremely well written with much care, accurate use of language and use of sophisticated and precise vocabulary.
- 3.12 The numeracy skills and knowledge of the pupils of all ages and abilities are very well developed, and they apply these extremely competently across a wide range of subjects and practical situations. Pupils in the EYFS were able to subtract single numbers using a number line with considerable ease, and the more able pupils then constructed complex subtraction sentences. Younger pupils demonstrated a very advanced understanding of levers and pivots and how they can reduce the effort needed to move an object, while an excellent science project enabled pupils to show their deep understanding of forces in testing their theory that they could pull a jumbo jet. Older pupils in geography were highly adept at interpreting data on the impact of different natural disasters on both developed and emerging countries.
- 3.13 Pupils display and apply highly developed ICT skills, and these skills have developed strongly during periods of lockdown. Applying their ICT skills when learning on-line has greatly developed pupils' independence in learning, allowing them to go further and deeper, if they choose. They are confident in using different platforms to organise their notes, retrieve key information and synthesise their work,

enhancing the depth of their learning. ICT skills contribute significantly to pupils' collaborative learning as seen in a GCSE MFL lesson where pupils worked in pairs rapidly with a randomiser tool, communicating with each other in different languages at a very high level. Pupils in GCSE music were very confident and competent when using software to notate musical compositions and in photography when using photographic platforms to manipulate and enhance their work. Older pupils in history annotated a presentation highly effectively to develop their notes on the 1905 Russian Revolution.

- 3.14 Pupils of all ages and abilities display excellent study habits and organisational and thinking skills throughout the school and across the breadth of the curriculum. Pupils in Year 12 develop research skills with a high degree of competency as part of the extended learning programme and extended project qualification (EPQ). The excellent student academic journal includes much of this research work in an absorbing series of essays which celebrate the academic achievements of senior pupils at the school. An excellent read! The youngest of children exhibit a deep desire to go beyond knowledge learnt in the classroom and assemblies, conducting research at home and bringing it to the class next day. In an English lesson, younger pupils with SEND read fluently, even challenging words such as 'exhilarated' and 'petrified', and could use similes and metaphors appropriately. Pupils with EAL demonstrate excellent study habits and work in a very purposeful manner in their written tasks. GCSE pupils in history displayed excellent skills of synthesis working from multiple primary sources on youth resistance in Nazi Germany and, in music, pupils listened intently to contrasting styles of music and then applied this knowledge to compose their own waltz.
- 3.15 A large majority of pupils, including those in the junior school, achieve notable success individually and in teams in sporting, musical, artistic, and cultural arenas. Cathedral choristers, both male and female, undertake professional training and duties to a world-class standard, singing for daily worship in the cathedral and undertaking broadcast, recording and touring engagements nationally and, in normal times, internationally. Academic achievements outside of the curriculum include exceptional success in competitions at regional and national levels: in Maths Olympiads with a current pupil representing the UK in the European Maths Olympiad, in UK Maths Challenge with many medals achieved, in foreign language speaking, debating and essay writing competitions. In 2021, senior school pupils won the Young Fashion Designer UK award and the Ilford Photo UK competition. Pupils across the senior and junior schools are highly successful regionally in hockey, cricket and rugby and nationally in rowing, hockey and equestrian sports with a current junior school pupil being the national champion for her age group. The first fifteen rugby team were *Rugby World's* team of the month in November 2019 following an unbeaten season. In discussions, pupils commented on the involvement of many pupils in the musical and drama productions as a particular strength of the school.
- 3.16 Pupils throughout the school demonstrate exemplary attitudes towards learning. They show a genuine appetite for learning whether working independently, collaboratively, or when taking the lead. They demonstrate extremely high levels of motivation and ownership of their learning, understanding their responsibilities towards this. In a GCSE religious studies (RS) lesson, pupils asked searching questions of the teacher when discussing a controversial topic, questions being asked in a mature and thoughtful way. Younger pupils listen carefully to others reading in a supportive and encouraging manner, offering praise when appropriate. Older pupils, in a science revision lesson, worked co-operatively in tackling the set problems and being mindful to listen to the opinions of each other, and in a MFL lesson, displayed their high-order skills in debating the vocabulary around cinema and explaining idioms to their teacher. Boarders show extremely positive attitudes towards their learning with several of them describing additional practices they had undertaken in order to effect improvements and cited the willingness of teachers to enthuse and encourage them.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.17 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.18 Pupils throughout the school, from the youngest children in the EYFS to the oldest senior school pupils, demonstrate substantial self-confidence in relation to their age and a very strong awareness of personal growth over time and are able to articulate their feelings about this extremely well. This was particularly evident in discussions with the sixth-form boarders. Pupils are able to engage in very thoughtful self-reflection about personal identity and character in both the junior and senior schools and can readily identify their own strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do to improve. Praise and encouragement are used throughout the school to great effect and have a clear impact on pupils' self-esteem. In their response to the questionnaire, a very large majority of parents agreed that the school helps their children be confident and independent. This view is supported by the majority of pupils in their discussions with the inspectors. Discussions with boarding staff highlighted the significant extent to which pupils learn to conduct themselves appropriately in social situations and to develop resilience. The excellent outcomes in pupils' personal development are due to the strong commitment of senior leaders, governors and staff to providing high levels of pastoral support.
- 3.19 Pupils of all ages become increasingly aware that the careful, thoughtful decisions and informed choices they make have a significant impact on themselves, their own success and well-being and their school. A very large majority of parents felt that the school listens and responds to the views of pupils; however, a very small minority of pupils disagree. Inspectors found various forums available for pupils to make their views known and saw the actions taken by the school in response, for example, charities now chosen by the pupils, changes in games kit for female pupils, provision of a diversity and inclusion group for pupils. A few parents disagree that their children receive suitable advice about choices of subjects and careers, a view that a small minority of pupils agree with. Following various discussions with staff, inspectors support these findings. Boarders felt that organising themselves supports the development of their decision-making abilities, becoming aware that different actions result in different outcomes. Senior school pupils taking part in the 'Ely Scheme' discuss in a mature and sophisticated manner the consequences of poor decision-making in a problem-solving task and the actions needed to avoid having to start the task again.
- 3.20 Throughout the school, pupils have a well-developed level of spiritual understanding and a strong sense of belonging. They are able to reflect deeply and thoughtfully on non-material aspects of life. Physically and spiritually, the cathedral is at the heart of the school. This was gracefully demonstrated by the senior school remembrance day service in the cathedral. Pupils commented to the inspectors, on walking back to the school, how this service and the Christmas carol service are significant, awe-inspiring and deeply poignant parts to their school life, pupils' exemplary behaviour reflecting this and the significance of the day. Choristers spoke of the satisfaction they derive from giving back to others and showed appreciation of this dimension of their lives. The level of professionalism displayed by the choristers, the chamber choir, the chapel choir upper voices and the musicians was exceptional in this service and at evensong. Pupils spoke with such pride of the chapel choir's deeply moving and evocative performance of 'Went the day well'. Similarly, in the junior school service, pupils stood in respectful silence as the names of the fallen were read out, were contemplative when considering the meaning of the poppies and were reverential when their choir sang 'Pie Jesu'. Younger pupils demonstrated excellent understanding of Sikh prayer cycles in their written work and commented upon the inspirational artwork around their school.
- 3.21 Pupils demonstrate excellent moral awareness and the ability to reflect upon and articulate moral and ethical ideas. They display a strong understanding of the difference between right and wrong and of being accountable for their actions. Typically, pupils of all ages display courtesy and respect for others, especially in the classroom. Senior school pupils expressed the powerful effect the pupil-led assembly on 'Black Lives Matter' (BLM) had on their awareness of this issue and how it had brought about a shift in their attitude and behaviour on it. Boarding pupils take care with their and others' belongings, demonstrating admirable respect and consideration for those with whom they share rooms. The

strong culture of trust seen to exist throughout the EYFS and junior school with constructive relationships across all year groups enables open respectful discussions between pupils and staff to occur in many lessons. Pupils clearly understand their code of conduct and, in discussions, confirmed that incidents of poor behaviour are rare.

- 3.22 Pupils' social skills are highly developed, and interaction with others is of high quality. There is a strong expectation of collaboration which exists at all ages throughout the school. Pupils work effectively with others to solve problems and achieve common goals and are highly supportive of each other's achievements. These factors help pupils to develop into considerate and empathetic young citizens. Most parents agreed that the school helps pupils develop teamwork and social skills. This is comprehensively seen in the 'Ely Scheme' where pupils in Year 9 engage enthusiastically and highly effectively in a range of indoor and outdoor activities which develop their team-building skills, oral and aural skills, perseverance and resilience in bringing a task to a successful conclusion. The youngest of pupils worked well together in pairs, learning to share and take turns, for example, when rolling out dough, making cakes and using pastry cutters. Excellent co-operation between younger pupils was seen when they used an online thesaurus to check the meaning of words and alternatives in a mature and sensible manner. In boarding, walking the house dogs is seen as both a sociable and cathartic way of enjoying others' company.
- 3.23 Pupils contribute extremely positively and willingly to the school and local communities and to society more broadly through the broad range of clubs, activities, and charitable initiatives, many of which are initiated and led by pupils. This is exemplified in the dedication of choristers to their singing, which they consider to be an important service rendered within the school and the local community, especially when they visit care homes at Christmas to sing carols. Pupils relish the opportunity to take up leadership roles at an early age: in the junior school there are pupil ambassadors, buddies, and librarians and a pupil-led eco group who all take their responsibilities extremely seriously, as do the older senior school instructors within the 'Ely Scheme'. Pupils are highly aware of issues relating to inequality and express this most effectively through whole-school and house-based charity work. Charities that have benefited from this recently are: a foodbank, a charity in Malawi that the school supports on an on-going basis and a youth suicide charity. Older pupils are also involved in the volunteering programme of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme.
- 3.24 Pupils are culturally aware and show a keen appreciation, respect and support for the diverse nature of their school community and genuinely welcome the difference and richness that this brings. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire felt the school responds effectively when pupils use unkind or prejudiced language to each other. Pupils recognise the importance of respecting diversity and consider that, while generally this is true around the school, there is always scope for further improvement, a very mature approach. They recognise that a great deal of priority has been given by the school to cultural inclusion in many of the recent assemblies, especially in response to issues around BLM and sexuality. Two of the most recent publications of the pupil-driven magazine, '*The Kestrel*', have been dedicated to 'Pride' month and black history month and included some very powerful, well-written articles. Older pupils in a RS lesson discussed both Christian and same-sex marriages in a mature and sensitive manner. The 'All welcome' noticeboard in the junior school lists events in different religions and organisations including 'Pride', all of which is aimed at raising pupils' awareness. Younger pupils enjoy learning about other cultures and faiths and particularly hearing about the lives of their peers. There is genuine warmth in their relationships.
- 3.25 Pupils of all ages within the school, both day and boarding, know how to stay safe and understand how to be physically and mentally healthy in ways that are appropriate for their ages, particularly in terms of diet, exercise, online safety, and a balanced lifestyle. This is enabled by the excellent and effective medical and counselling support network for pupils, the PSHE and RHSE programmes, visiting speakers, and the sport and activity programmes. All pupils throughout the school take part in regular physical exercise, and they commented on how they appreciate the benefits of participating in the wide range of physical activities available. Almost all pupils agreed that they know how to stay safe

online, and they feel safe and secure in school, a consideration supported by an overwhelming number of parents. Pupils spoke most highly of the efforts being made by the school and its pastoral teams in addressing the current national concerns about well-being and mental health issues.

4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and the safeguarding governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended house assemblies and form meetings and a remembrance service in Ely cathedral. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Michael Evans	Reporting inspector
Mr Bill Ibbotson-Price	Accompanying reporting inspector
Mrs Valerie Stewart	Compliance team inspector (Assistant principal, ISA school)
Mr Rob Thornton	Team inspector (Headmaster, ISA school)
Ms Katherine Bainbridge	Team inspector (Deputy head, ISA school)
Mrs Elizabeth Harris	Team inspector (Former director of music, IAPS school)
Mr Simon Detre	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, IAPS school)
Dr Mary Plint	Team inspector for boarding (Deputy head, HMC school)

