

# School inspection report

11 to 13 November 2025

## King's College Taunton

South Road

Taunton

Somerset

TA1 3LA

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. Leaders work collaboratively to provide a nurturing environment. They prioritise pupils' wellbeing and high-quality pastoral care, which underpins a vibrant and caring community where pupils are known, supported and valued. Highly effective integration of boarding and day pupils fosters a cohesive and inclusive culture in which positive relationships flourish. Rigorous monitoring of pupils' wellbeing and individual needs ensures consistent and timely support. The extensive co-curricular programme complements the provision, providing rich opportunities where pupils excel. Together, these elements create a nurturing, dynamic community in which pastoral care is of the highest priority, therefore pupils thrive socially and emotionally. This is a significant strength of the school.
2. Teachers have a positive impact on pupils' development of knowledge and skills. Their enthusiasm, good subject knowledge, varied teaching techniques and use of good-quality resources creates a positive learning environment. Pupils develop a love of learning and the confidence to take risks and make mistakes, knowing that this is an opportunity to learn. Teachers ensure that pupils' needs are met, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Support is available for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). However, leaders do not track the language development of pupils' who speak EAL. They do not know how effectively they are meeting the precise linguistic needs of pupils.
3. Pupils are fully involved in the life of the school. They are consulted on aspects of their education through frequent surveys, and their opinions are sought through the school council and house meetings. They develop leadership skills through the many opportunities given to take on roles of responsibility such as house captain, prefect and school council representative. In addition to the structured personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) curriculum, pupils are provided with valuable opportunities to participate in community initiatives. These include activities such as reading with primary school pupils and assisting at the local foodbank. Through these experiences, pupils gain understanding of social responsibility and contribution.
4. The co-curricular and sporting programme is extensive and offers a range of activities, societies and sports to develop pupils' skills and knowledge and promote new interests. Pupils develop leadership skills, resilience and self-confidence through participation in activities, sports and through running their own clubs.
5. Safeguarding is given the highest priority in the school. Staff are well trained and understand their responsibility to keep the children in their care safe. Pupils are confident that any concerns they may raise will be acted upon and that they have a wide variety of trusted adults to whom they can turn.
6. The arrangements for health and safety are robust, with meticulous record-keeping and a system of checks ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the pupils. The school maintains a robust culture of risk assessment, including welfare checks, to protect the safety and wellbeing of pupils and staff.

## 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

The proprietor / leaders should:

- develop more precise monitoring of pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL) so that leaders can be assured that they are fully meeting pupils' linguistic needs.

## Section 1: Leadership and management, and governance

7. Leaders at the school are committed to the promotion of pupils' wellbeing by the provision of outstanding pastoral care within a cohesive and supportive community, in line with their aims. This commitment fosters an environment that supports pupils' academic, social and emotional growth.
8. Knowledgeable and skilled governors are proactive, offering support and guidance. They oversee policies and their implementation effectively. They ensure that the requirements of the Standards are met consistently. Regular audits of provision and visits to the school, along with surveys of parents, pupils and staff, ensure that the members of the governing body are well informed and carry out their responsibilities effectively.
9. The school has an ambitious five-year development plan based on meticulous, detailed planning and monitoring. The plan is written following consultation with parents, staff and governors. The performance of staff is regularly evaluated, and the school has a comprehensive programme of staff development that covers the training needs of the staff according to their needs.
10. Members of the senior leadership team work collaboratively with support staff to robustly manage important areas of the school's work, such as attendance, medical provision, first aid and safeguarding, to ensure that staff responsibilities are clear and in place to best support the needs of pupils. Appropriate referrals are made to external agencies as required to ensure the safety of pupils.
11. Leaders take the time to listen and respond to pupils' views through regular surveys, the school council, pupil-led committees and house meetings, addressing such issues that are important to pupils. The leaders of the school are highly visible and known to the pupils. They ensure that pupils understand what is expected of them and foster the welcoming, community atmosphere within the school, setting the tone for positive relationships throughout the community.
12. The management of boarding is highly effective. Leaders have created a welcoming and supportive culture through the house system, where boarders and day pupils are integrated and value the communal environment. Resident staff are highly trained and act as positive role models for the pupils, building secure relationships and encouraging pupils to develop their independence within a safe environment.
13. The required information is available for parents related to their child's academic and pastoral development. Parents' evenings give parents a holistic picture of their child's progress. Reports are written at regular intervals throughout the school year and are available to parents via the school portal. This ensures that parents are well informed about their child's academic progress and personal development and enables parents to engage meaningfully with their child's learning, celebrate successes and support areas for improvement. Additionally, parents receive a weekly video from the headteacher ensuring that they are well informed about school life.
14. Required information for parents and external agencies is made available, often through the school's website. The local authority is informed of any pupils who arrive or leave at non-standard transition points. Although there are no pupils currently with an education, health and care plan (EHC plan), leaders understand their responsibilities to report to the local authority should there be any in the future.

15. Those with responsibility for risk management are well trained and use their expertise to ensure that the site, buildings, houses and co-curricular activities are safe. Risk assessments identify physical and welfare risks, along with suitable actions taken to mitigate or remove the risk. Risk assessments for educational visits at home and abroad are overseen by a trained educational visits co-ordinator. All risk assessments are reviewed on an annual basis or when there is a change to the risks identified, to ensure the safety of the pupils.
16. The complaints procedure is detailed and record-keeping is thorough, recording all concerns, their outcomes and actions taken. Complaints are responded to within the timeframe given and tracked for patterns. There are suitable procedures for boarders to raise complaints and any concerns raised in this way are analysed separately to ensure the wellbeing of boarders.
17. Leaders have a comprehensive accessibility plan that outlines improvements to enable pupils who have a disability to access the curriculum and facilities. In this plan, the improvements are costed and a timeframe is indicated. The requirements of the Equality Act 2010 are met.

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

- 18. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Section 2: Quality of education, training and recreation

19. Leaders have established a curriculum and co-curricular programme that plans for pupils to develop knowledge and understanding across a wide range of areas, leading to an array of qualifications. The curriculum is age appropriate and is adapted in light of pupils' changing abilities, interests and aspirations, for example by the introduction of GCSE photography and the BTEC National Diploma in sport. Leaders interweave the planning and teaching of important school values, such as mutual respect, tolerance, democracy and individual liberty.
20. Teaching has a consistently positive impact on pupils' acquisition of knowledge and skills. Teachers have good subject knowledge, employ a wide range of strategies and a good range of resources, which supports pupils' understanding and knowledge. They provide regular and helpful guidance to pupils about how to improve and consolidate their learning and understanding.
21. Pupils are articulate and communicate clearly. They work independently and collaboratively, developing confidence and resilience. They are encouraged to think creatively and be curious. For instance, in Year 9 physics, pupils are challenged to explain energy transfer in a bungee jump. They take obvious pride in their work and actively seek ways in which to raise their achievement levels and persevere in their learning. Pupils take opportunities to further consolidate their understanding via academic clinics, support in house or through academic enrichment opportunities.
22. Leaders provide an array of opportunities for pupils to extend their learning through activities such as the public speaking club, the 'pelican academic society' and entry into national competitions such as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) architectural design competition. House debates, where pupils discuss topics such as potential links between video games and violence, further extend knowledge and skills of oracy. In the sixth form, pupils extend their research skills and independent learning through the innovative skills programme, where all pupils complete a two-day research project. Pupils in the sixth form have the opportunity to take the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
23. Leaders have established a coherent assessment framework that provides staff and parents with reliable information about pupils' progress and attainment. Leaders use a wealth of information about pupil performance, welfare and behaviour, which is collated and monitored closely. Regular assessment points, using baseline testing on entry, ensure that performance is tracked systematically across subjects and year groups. Underperformance is identified and individual support, be it pastoral or academic, tailored to pupils' needs, is put in place to enable them to make good progress and attain well in their GCSE and A-level qualifications.
24. Leaders ensure that the identification of, and support for pupils who have SEND is effective. Leaders provide staff with clear guidance about how best to support pupils' needs and ensure that staff are well trained to deliver the support. Pupils' provision and experience is reviewed regularly to check that their needs are being well met. Where needed, some pupils access additional small-group intervention or one-to-one support sessions. Over time, pupils who have SEND learn and achieve well.
25. Pupils who speak EAL are assessed on entry to the school to determine their language proficiency. Support for these pupils is provided either within subjects or through dedicated EAL lessons. The progress of pupils who speak EAL is monitored through the school's tracking system. However, this

tracking reviews pupils' achievement in a range of subjects but not their language development. As a result, leaders do not know how well they are meeting the specific linguistic needs of pupils to fully develop their English language skills.

26. Leaders ensure that there is an extensive programme of co-curricular and additional activities available to pupils. Pupils take part in events and clubs, such as Ten Tors, zorb club, debating society and drama, sporting and musical activities. Staff routinely review pupils' experience to check on their wellbeing, involvement and experience. Most pupils are members of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) or take part in the extensive community support programme, developing a sense of service. There is a further programme of activities for boarders in the evenings and at weekends, which covers sports, activities such as laser tag, in-house quizzes, as well as visits to local towns.
27. Leaders have invested in ensuring that more pupils can access co-curricular activities. They have extended the school day and school transport to allow more day pupils to benefit from the provision. In addition, day pupils have accommodation in the boarding houses so that they can stay overnight to allow participation. This is increasing pupils' confidence, participation and wellbeing.

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

28. All the relevant Standards are met.

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

29. Leaders provide outstanding holistic pastoral care, which enables pupils to be valued as individuals in a vibrant and welcoming community. The precise work of leaders to integrate the house system and boarding provision ensures seamless support for pupils. An array of staff, such as house leaders and personal tutors, work collectively to provide tailored personal wellbeing, academic guidance, and encouragement to pupils. Pupils actively and enthusiastically celebrate each other's successes, for example through well-planned assemblies and house activities. Rigorous monitoring of pupils' wellbeing and individual needs ensures consistent and timely support, including through the support of specialist external services, when needed. As a result, pupils access an environment in which kindness, inclusion and respect are commonplace. Pupils develop in self-esteem and self-confidence, and positive relationships flourish.
30. Through chapel services, religious studies (RS) lessons, art, drama and music, and the annual wellbeing day, pupils have positive exposure to the non-material aspects of life and the opportunity to explore their own spirituality. The spiritual development of pupils is enhanced by an emphasis on collective worship in chapel. The messages given in talks and sermons are inclusive, for example encouraging the benefits of singing to one's mental and physical health.
31. Through the PSHE programme and in collaboration with the tutorial programme, leaders provide a programme that covers all the required content in innovative and engaging ways. The programme is adapted to cover up-to-date societal issues such as, for example, recent discussions on the plight of refugees, and is delivered by a team of trained staff and assessed via pupil surveys and journals.
32. The relationships and sex education (RSE) programme, developed in consultation with parents, pupils and staff, is delivered by a team of specially trained staff. Topics such as puberty, healthy masculinity and consent are delivered in an age-appropriate and sensitive way, ensuring that pupils have the knowledge to make informed decisions in the future.
33. The school has effective policies and processes in place for behaviour and anti-bullying. Detailed logs of behavioural and bullying concerns are kept, in order that patterns of behaviour are identified and action taken. Leaders ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is in place and is known to staff and pupils. Consequently, pupils respect each other, behave very well, are polite, helpful and positive. Incidents of poor behaviour or bullying are rare and dealt with highly effectively.
34. Prefects have a range of relevant and appropriate responsibilities that allow them to act as role models to younger pupils and develop leadership skills. They work closely with the leadership and management of the school to provide opportunities to hear pupils' opinions and to represent the views of the pupils within the community.
35. There is a comprehensive approach to the monitoring of attendance in accordance with statutory requirements. Leaders monitor attendance and report any pupils who leave or join the school at non-standard transition points to the local authority as required.
36. Leaders have a thorough and comprehensive approach to the implementation of the health and safety policy, including that related to fire safety. Roles are clearly understood and staff training ensures that all are aware of their responsibilities in this area. Meticulous record-keeping ensures

that all checks are made as required and training is up to date. Premises are in good repair, with a programme of refurbishment in place, and any maintenance issues are identified quickly and dealt with effectively. Pupils are appropriately supervised within lessons, co-curricular and off-site activities and in houses, including overnight.

37. Boarding accommodation is of a good standard, offering pupils a safe, comfortable and well-furnished environment. The boarding principles and practice are clearly defined and routines are consistently applied to ensure that boarders are supported and able to thrive. The house structure promotes integration and inclusion between day and boarding pupils. Each house has a wellbeing prefect, available for any pupils with concerns, and an international prefect who looks after international boarders. The provision promotes independence, nurtures positive relationships and builds a secure sense of community, making a significant contribution to pupils' personal development and enjoyment of school life.
38. Pupils benefit from the broad and flexible sporting provision. Pupils have physical education (PE) lessons within the curriculum that include a wide variety of sports, including team games and wider opportunities such as badminton, golf, swimming, cross-country and squash. The programme encourages sport for all as part of a healthy lifestyle and provides coaching, and strength and conditioning for pupils who wish to participate at an elite level. A very large proportion of pupils represent the school in these sports competitively and individuals enjoy significant success locally and nationally. Through the PE programme, pupils develop skills of teamwork, leadership and resilience as part of a community that values a healthy lifestyle.
39. There is a robust procedure for training staff in first aid, and medical care and counselling are provided at the on-site medical centre. The medical centre is run by qualified nurses who are also available at night to care for the boarding community. Medical interventions are recorded appropriately, accidents and near misses are recorded, patterns examined, and action taken.

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

- 40. All the relevant Standards are met.**

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

41. Leaders actively promote respect, tolerance and inclusivity. International pupils are welcomed and accepted into the community with warmth. Their cultures are celebrated through assemblies and events such as 'Polish food day'. The integration of the boarding and day pupils in the houses, supported by house parents, tutors and heads of year, promotes positive relationships across year groups and develops a close-knit community. The equality, diversity and inclusion group is a valued part of the school community, providing a platform for pupils and staff to engage in meaningful dialogue, raise awareness and celebrate diversity. As a result of the inclusive culture and activities, pupils are respectful of each other and celebrate each other's differences.
42. Within the taught curriculum and in the co-curriculum, pupils learn about topics such as law, democracy and other aspects of British society. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their views within houses, activities and a range of pupil forums. Voting for positions such as house captains gives the pupils practical experience of democracy. Pupils are aware of current political and economic issues and often discuss them in tutor groups and assemblies. Recent topics include the eradication of poverty, child labour and the elimination of violence against women. Consequently, pupils recognise and value their roles and responsibilities as future citizens.
43. Pupils gain an understanding of economic education through the PSHE programme, and in the sixth form, through the 'skills' course. For instance, pupils in Year 9 take part in a two-day entrepreneurial challenge where they design a product and look at funding models for its launch. In the sixth form, pupils gain an appreciation of economic and social issues including taxation, investments and university fees. Pupils develop skills that will be useful in the next phase of their education, alongside a social, cultural and economic understanding that prepares them for life in British society.
44. Pupils' understanding of social responsibility and what is right and what is wrong are honed through PSHE, RS lessons and chapel services. They support their local area through their involvement in charity and partnership work in the local community. Pupils donate to the local food and clothing banks and visit the residents in the local care home. Pupils in the sixth form visit a range of primary schools, where they read with pupils, teach modern foreign languages or lead sporting activities as part of the school's sports leadership programme. Senior pupils and prefects take responsibility for organising and delivering a range of school and house duties, including supporting younger pupils with their academic work in the boarding house. Through the planning and delivery of these activities, pupils learn the importance of making a positive contribution to society as well as developing their confidence, leadership skills and economic understanding.
45. Members of the school council make a positive contribution to the running of the school and have influenced decisions in recent times, such as improving the salad bar and introducing different uniform options for female pupils. Pupils are confident that their views will be considered and that they will receive supportive and helpful feedback on their ideas.
46. The school ensures that pupils benefit from comprehensive careers guidance through the school's 'futures' programme. Careers guidance starts with discussions and analysis of pupils' individual interests and skills, leading to guidance on GCSE option choices. Older pupils receive impartial advice, tailored guidance and access to opportunities such as work experience, visiting speakers and employer partnerships. In the sixth form, there is a comprehensive skills programme that includes

guidance on future education choices and preparation for the world of work. This integrated approach equips every pupil with the knowledge, confidence and skills to make informed choices and succeed in their next stage of education, training or employment.

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

**47. All the relevant Standards are met.**

## Safeguarding

48. Safeguarding is recognised as a whole-school responsibility. The inclusive pastoral structure in the school ensures that pupils are safe and that any concerns they have will be dealt with quickly and discreetly. Safeguarding arrangements in the boarding houses are robust and comprehensive and house parents are proactive in supporting the wellbeing of the pupils in their care.
49. The comprehensive safeguarding policy is written in line with statutory and local guidance and is reviewed annually and approved by the governing body. The designated safeguarding governor visits the school regularly, undertakes a range of checks on the effectiveness of leaders' work and is available for support and advice. An annual review of safeguarding is undertaken in school and an annual safeguarding audit is completed for the local authority, from which advice and training is sought.
50. Those with responsibility for safeguarding have the skills and knowledge to undertake their responsibilities and undergo regular training. Staff at the school receive annual intensive training, which includes a check on their understanding, and regular updates, including in the 'Prevent' duty.
51. Staff understand how to deal with a disclosure by a pupil or how to escalate any concerns they may have about a colleague. The specific vulnerabilities of pupils who have additional needs are understood and taken into account when dealing with safeguarding or any other issues that may arise.
52. Pupils are very well supported, with a plethora of adults whom they can approach for help, including their tutor, their house parent, teachers, members of the safeguarding team and the chaplain. Pupils have access to an anonymous online reporting service and an independent person, and counselling services are available to support pupils with their mental health and wellbeing.
53. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including when online, in PSHE and computer science lessons. Information for parents regarding how to keep their child safe online is given through specific events in school and made available online. There is an appropriate internet filtering and monitoring system in place and alerts on the system are followed up by the safeguarding team.
54. Senior staff and the safeguarding governor are trained in safer recruitment. Recruitment of staff is carried out appropriately. The required pre-employment checks are completed before the start of employment and are recorded on the single central record of appointments (SCR) and in staff files. These processes and documentation are regularly checked by the headteacher and the safeguarding governor.

### The extent to which the school meets Standards relating to safeguarding

55. All the relevant Standards are met.

## School details

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| <b>School</b>                          | King's College Taunton   |
| <b>Department for Education number</b> | 933/6023   |
| <b>Registered charity number</b>       | 1103346  |
| <b>Address</b>                         | King's College Taunton<br>South Road<br>Taunton<br>Somerset<br>TA1 3LA |
| <b>Phone number</b>                    | 01823 328200   |
| <b>Email address</b>                   | hmsec@kings-taunton.co.uk  |
| <b>Website</b>                         | <a href="http://www.kings-taunton.co.uk">www.kings-taunton.co.uk</a>   |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                      | Woodard Schools Taunton Limited  |
| <b>Chair</b>                           | Commodore Jolyon Woodard RN  |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                     | Mr Michael Sloan   |
| <b>Age range</b>                       | 13 to 19   |
| <b>Number of pupils</b>                | 392  |
| <b>Number of boarding pupils</b>       | 172  |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>     | 19 to 20 October 2022  |

## Information about the school

56. King's College is a co-educational boarding and day school, situated in Taunton, Somerset. It is owned by the Woodard Schools group. The school is a registered charity where trustees govern via a governing body known as the school council. The headteacher assumed his position in 2022, and the chair of governors, in 2025. Since the previous inspection, an extensive refurbishment programme has been carried out, encompassing several areas such as boarding houses. Additionally, a new sixth-form centre and junior common room have been constructed on the premises.
57. The school has six boarding houses on site: three for male pupils and three for female pupils, for pupils aged 13 to 18 years old.
58. The school has identified 120 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are no pupils in the school with an education, health and care plan.
59. The school has identified English as an additional language for 81 pupils.
60. The school states its aims are to foster courage in a challenging world, while upholding a family-orientated culture and Christian ethos. It is dedicated to providing a nurturing environment where each pupil receives personalised support, enabling them to thrive both academically and personally. With a steadfast commitment to the local community, the school actively encourages curiosity, teamwork, excellence, endeavour and the willingness to take risks. The school's values are grounded in respect, open-mindedness and a genuine desire to see every individual flourish.

## Inspection details

|                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>Inspection dates</b> | 11 to 13 November 2025 |
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61. A team of six inspectors visited the school for two and a half days.

62. 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
- visits to boarding houses accompanied by pupils and staff
- scrutiny of samples of pupils' work
- scrutiny of a range of policies, documentation and records provided by the school.

63. 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](http://www.isi.net).

**Independent Schools Inspectorate**

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For more information, please visit [isi.net](http://isi.net)