



IAPS

Report of Diagnostic Review Inspection Visit

to

Kenton College Preparatory School

by an

IAPS Review Team

from

12th – 14th October 2011

IAPS DIAGNOSTIC REVIEW INSPECTION VISIT
REPORT ON
Kenton College Preparatory School

Full name of school: Kenton College Preparatory School

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Email Address: admin@kenton.ac.ke

Head teacher: Mrs Maureen Cussans

Chairman of Trustees and Governors: Mr Chris Banks

Age Range: 6-13 years

Gender: Mixed

Inspection Dates: 12th – 14th October 2011

The review does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The reviewers check the general health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter; they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their review of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features. Reviewers do not check in detail the school's compliance with prevailing regulations, nor have they been asked to comment on governance.

Contents:

1. Background to the school
2. Pupils' standards and their attitudes to work and learning
3. The curriculum
4. Extra-curricular activities
5. Teaching and assessment
6. Pastoral care, welfare, health and safety
7. The quality of leadership and management
8. Overall conclusions and recommendations
9. Evidence summary

1. Background to the school

- 1.1 Kenton College is a co-educational day preparatory school for pupils aged from 6 to 13 years. Founded in 1924 as a boys' boarding school in the Rift Valley of Kenya, the school moved to its present site in central Nairobi in 1935. Girls were first admitted in 1992, and boarding ended in 1998. The school stands in attractive grounds covering 35 acres in the mainly residential suburb of Kileleshwa. The school is an educational trust with a board of seven governors. Children are welcomed from Kenya and all parts of the world, and most live in Nairobi or its suburbs and surrounding rural areas.
- 1.2 Having started with just 17 boys, the school now has 258 pupils, consisting of 124 boys and 134 girls. Twelve pupils have undertaken an assessment by an educational psychologist and receive specialist support for special educational needs (SEN).
- 1.3 Over 30 nationalities are represented amongst the pupils, reflecting the multi-cultural nature of Nairobi and the school, in which a balance is maintained between pupils of African, Asian, European origin and those of mixed race. The school has a Christian ethos, although families of other faiths or none are equally welcome. The school is over-subscribed, so admission is based on an entry assessment where priority is given to siblings and children of Old Kentonians, and a range of abilities is selected.
- 1.4 The school aims to provide a purposeful and happy environment, with opportunities for children of all races to discover and exploit talents and strengths, and so develop academically, culturally, physically, socially and spiritually. The intention is to have a caring and supportive character of the school to enable children to flourish in a community where values of honesty, self-reliance, co-operation, respect for and consideration of others are nurtured. The school also aims to provide a well-balanced curriculum to ensure that every child leaving Kenton College will gain access to a secondary school of their choice, in Kenya or overseas, and move on in the world as a competent, self-assured individual.
- 1.5 English National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. Pupils' standards and their attitudes to work and learning

- 2.1 The overall quality of pupils' achievements is outstanding. In the lessons observed, pupils' achievements were always at least those expected of their age, and were often far beyond that level. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson pupils were able to solve complex simultaneous equations. Standards in music are particularly high, with a number of pupils achieving individual examination successes at high grades on a variety of instruments and singing. In 2011, the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of music examined 160 pupils on thirteen instruments. The vast majority of pupils learn one instrument, with more than one third learning a second instrument or singing. Achievements in individual and team sports are also excellent. At least two

Old Kentonians are due to participate in the 2012 Olympic Games, having been successful at Beijing in 2008.

- 2.2 Pupils apply their skills to good effect in many areas of the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. They speak confidently, as was seen in a Year 7 English lesson, when pupils prepared for a debate on the morality of keeping animals in zoos. They write with confidence and accuracy, for example in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils wrote up their experiment on the combustion of magnesium. Mathematical skills are well developed and also applied in other subject areas. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are well established, and examples of word-processed tasks were seen in classrooms alongside more traditional work.
- 2.3 These high levels of attainment show that pupils make exceptionally good progress while they are at the school in relation to their range of abilities. They all go on at 13+ to a range of selective senior schools in the United Kingdom, Kenya or a number of other countries.
- 2.4 Attitudes to work are often exemplary. Pupils are industrious, and persevere with work. They work highly effectively in groups, as seen in a Year 5 ICT lesson, in which pupils collaborated to program electronic robots to move around the floor. In the majority of the lessons observed, opportunities for pupils to use initiative or to take responsibility for their own learning were limited, and at times pupils were over-reliant on their teachers for decisions that they could have made for themselves, for example asking for help when the dotted line on a worksheet was too short for an intended response.

3. The curriculum

- 3.1 Overall, the school offers an outstanding curriculum which is broad and well balanced. Pupils have extensive opportunities in a range of subjects, based around a core of mathematics, English and science, with French, geography, history, religious studies, Latin, Kiswahili, German and Spanish. ICT is taught as a discreet subject throughout the school and pupils have lessons in art, music, personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and physical education (PE), including swimming. The teaching of games is allocated a significant part of the week, with academic lessons starting very early in the morning to allow for non-academic pursuits in the afternoon.
- 3.2 Pupils are taught in parallel classes up to Year 4. They are then divided by ability into up to four different groups for mathematics, English and French in each year group from Year 5. For their other subjects, they are taught in parallel classes until Year 7 and Year 8, when they are divided by ability into two groups. This system is effective in enabling those of all abilities to gain maximum benefit from the curriculum.
- 3.3 Pupils with SEN are supported by specialist teaching that assists them very effectively with their work. Provision is also made for gifted and talented pupils, through extension tasks and additional sessions. The curriculum is further enhanced by special events, including extensive practical fieldwork studies, regional challenges and an excellent array of educational trips and visits.

- 3.4 Overall, the curriculum is entirely appropriate and suitably rigorous for the age of the pupils and it is planned to cater for all individual abilities and learning styles. Thorough and detailed planning is at the centre of the cohesive curriculum, operating throughout the school. Regular and well-structured meetings take place involving senior management and staff to discuss issues, and thereby to ensure that the curriculum is constantly reviewed and developed.

4. Extra-curricular activities

- 4.1 The provision of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and is a particularly strong feature of the school. An extensive and well-managed range of formal activities (called SAGS or JAGS, for senior and junior activities groups respectively) are organised after lunch, in which pupils have diverse opportunities to augment their learning. All pupils are presented with a plethora of experiences, including bird watching, fretsaw, verse reading, beads, needlework and drama. A further array of activities is scheduled at lunchtime and after school, including musical ensembles, scooter training and horse riding. These further enhance the overall educational experience.
- 4.2 The facilities for curricular and extra-curricular activities include extensive grounds with ample pitches, tennis courts and woodland, a new swimming pool, a multi-purpose hall, dedicated art and design technology rooms, as well as well-equipped science laboratories and music rooms. The enthusiastic staff play a fundamental role in planning and teaching an exceptional programme of activities that genuinely makes a substantial impact on the pupils' learning, as seen in a senior philosophy session, in which pupils discussed 'giving up when the going gets tough'.
- 4.3 An additional array of trips and visits also contributes to the breadth of experience offered to the pupils. Junior pupils enjoy a number of local day trips that enhance their learning, including Flower Farm and Bomas of Kenya. More senior pupils undertake residential trips that include team building and leadership, with Year 7 pupils mentioning the excursion to Babong as a particular favourite. A well-organised, Year 8 post-examination programme, 'Wider Horizons', gives pupils who are about to move on to senior schools some valuable life skills. Kenton College has created a school for the indigenous population in a Nairobi slum, and this gives pupils a humbling sense of their privileged position and the opportunity to help improve the quality of life for other children.

5. Teaching and assessment

- 5.1 The overall quality of teaching is good with many outstanding features. In none of the lessons observed was teaching unsatisfactory. In the vast majority of lessons, teaching was better than satisfactory and in several instances it was outstanding. In the best lessons seen, planning was very detailed and took account of every pupil's individual needs. Teachers were aware of which pupils learnt best by visual, auditory or kinaesthetic approaches, and ensured that a variety of strategies catered for all of these. In the lessons where the quality of teaching was not outstanding, time was

sometimes wasted while pupils waited for simple classroom management tasks to be carried out, or teachers spent time with individual pupils while others waited for the lesson to continue.

- 5.2 Classrooms are generally well equipped, but in some rooms the layout of furniture and other resources is not entirely efficient. Boards are sometimes not in the optimum position, data projectors are on desks rather than being ceiling mounted, or electrical sockets are insufficient in number or inconveniently placed.
- 5.3 Helped by rigorous systems of assessment, pupils' progress is carefully monitored at regular meetings, and progress within lessons was often seen to be rapid. Detailed records are kept in a variety of ways and places, rather than in a central, computerised system, but this was not seen to have any negative impact. English National Curriculum levels are used as part of the assessment structure, alongside standardised tests, and staff are trained to apply the National Curriculum levels consistently and accurately.

6. Pastoral care, welfare, health and safety

- 6.1 The arrangements for pastoral care, welfare, health and safety are good. Pupils are well looked after with a strong structure of support surrounding them. Relationships with staff are sound and pupils are purposeful and committed. The behaviour of the pupils is almost invariably good, and they are polite, well-mannered and courteous. They respond well to the motivation of rewards through a merit system, and sanctions (demerits and yellow cards) are generally seen to be fair. Pupils have a good sense of community and pride in their school, which is fostered through a house system. Pupils in Year 8 are able to take on such responsibilities as prefects or house captains, although some pupils felt that it was unfair that some of their peers held more than one position of responsibility, limiting the opportunities for others.
- 6.2 Throughout the school, pupils have a form teacher who is seen as the first contact for pastoral matters. The form teachers are responsible for individual personal development and know their allocated pupils very well. Frequent 'Effort Grade Meetings' take place to discuss and monitor the progress and welfare of each individual pupil. Staff give pupils very positive guidance and there are clear and extensive policy documents that assist with an overall consistency of care throughout the school.
- 6.3 The school has in place appropriate measures for safeguarding pupils. A designated child protection officer has received the necessary training from a UK safeguarding specialist, and all staff have undertaken child protection training relevant to their role in the school. In addition, there is also a designated governor responsible for safeguarding. A comprehensive PSHCE programme, along with informative assemblies, gives clear and sensitive guidance to pupils. The anti-bullying policy and helpful notices are displayed around the school. In interviews, pupils said that bullying is very rare, and any instances are speedily resolved by staff.
- 6.4 The provision for health and safety is thorough and a recent inspection by the British High Commission confirmed a positive focus on the overall security of the site.

Visitors have to pre-book in advance to gain admission to the site, and then register at the school office. Pupils are efficiently registered and signed out when they leave. Emergency action procedures are regularly practised, and staff receive appropriate training. The designated health and safety officer carries out regular checks to identify any issues. Regular fire practices are held and a fire officer has been appointed. A designated governor reports to the board on health and safety matters.

- 6.5 Medical provision, located in a central position, consists of a secure and well-equipped surgery and a separate room for pupils who are unwell. The medical staff are well-qualified and, in addition to school duties, spend time working in the local hospital casualty department. A rolling programme of training ensures that staff are up to date with first aid procedures.
- 6.6 Food at the school is nutritious, plentiful, balanced and healthy. Provision is also made for pupils who are vegetarian. Lunch is a pleasant, social occasion. Pupils have ample opportunity to exercise regularly in their free time and in organised sport.

7. The quality of leadership and management

- 7.1 The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. The governors are most effective in their strategic oversight of the school, and the chairman knows the school intimately and liaises closely with the headmistress. At the time of the review visit, several changes had recently been made to the senior management team, with two completely new appointments and one internal promotion. As acknowledged by many parents in the pre-visit questionnaire, the headmistress is a determined and focused leader. Senior management works most efficiently, with each member of the team having a clearly-defined role within a structure that is undoubtedly understood by pupils and staff.
- 7.2 A clear vision for future improvement is evident, and every effort is made to build still further on current accomplishments. Heads of each department keep meticulous records, and are effective in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.
- 7.3 Good quality policies and procedures have been produced for all areas of school life. These are up-to-date and accurately reflect current practice. Staff are familiar with these, and implement them effectively.
- 7.4 The school seeks to employ the best-quality staff, and to support professional development with appropriate training. All necessary checks are in place to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Teaching, classroom support staff and other non-teaching staff are deployed to optimum effect, and make a substantial contribution to the success of the school and the high standards that pupils achieve.

8. Overall conclusions and recommendations

- 8.1 Kenton College provides an excellent, high quality education for its pupils. The overall achievement of the pupils is outstanding. Pupils have exemplary attitudes to learning and they approach every task with great enthusiasm. All are enabled to go on to selective schools of their choice. The breadth of the curriculum and good teaching underpin this success, although on occasions opportunities for pupils to show initiative and to take responsibility for their own learning are limited. Marking is thorough and includes much well-deserved praise in addition to suggestions for future improvement. Pupils are successful beyond the classroom, with significant successes particularly in sport and music. Outstanding extra-curricular activities contribute extremely well to school life, especially with the unique and highly successful programme of SAGS and JAGS. Enhancements to the excellent curriculum by trips and visitors also add to the school's undoubted success.
- 8.2 The pupils' personal development is particularly good, with sound relationships existing within the school. Safeguarding the welfare of the pupils is of paramount concern to every member of staff. All requisite procedures and policies are in place, and staff are trained appropriately.
- 8.3 Excellent leadership and management at all levels enable day-to-day school life to proceed calmly and efficiently. Both senior staff and the governors have a clear vision for the future development and success of the school. Human and physical resources are deployed well, but on occasions the layout of furniture and other resources in classrooms is not entirely efficient.

Recommendations

In order to build on the many good or excellent features of the education the school provides, it should seek to:

1. Increase opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and to show initiative.
2. Carry out an audit of classroom layouts and the position of resources within them to enable optimum use of all available space.

9. Evidence Summary

- 9.1 The visit was carried out from the 12th - 14th October 2011. In advance of the review, school documents were scrutinised. Other documentation was considered during the course of the review. In addition a sample of pupils' work from each year group was scrutinised. Discussions were held with pupils and classrooms and other school facilities were visited. Discussions were also held with senior staff. Registration, lunch, break times and assemblies were also observed.

Review Team

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