



KENT COLLEGE
CANTERBURY

The Good Schools Guide
Review

“The Good Schools Guide has been providing parents worldwide with honest, unbiased reviews of British schools for over 30 years.

The UK’s number one school guide advises parents on all aspects of education for over 1,000 schools and Kent College Canterbury is proud to be one of them. We welcomed their consultants for interviews with our Head Teachers, current parents and pupils in order to give prospective parents a credible, transparent and trusted view of our school. The review we received gives a very positive summary of what it’s like to attend Kent College, from every angle.”

Dr Lamper, Executive Head

THE GSG VIEW OF KENT COLLEGE

Waiting lists just starting to form and we can see why. An excellent choice for those wanting a wide range of options. Praise from pupils for the music and for the business studies, for the sports and for the great English department. Room to be an all-rounder at this school but no space for the arrogant or madly pushy (though good added value results). Teachers and students need to buy into the importance of egalitarianism as an ethos, and both the pupil who gets 45 out of 45 for IB and the pupil who loves hockey and squeezes into university for sports science are equally valued.



EXECUTIVE HEAD, Dr David Lamper



He clearly has vision and is 'incredibly able'.

Since 2007, David Lamper (50s); studied music at King's College London and then obtained a masters in education followed by a doctorate in education and leadership at the Institute of Education in London. He taught at Dulwich College and at a comprehensive school, and then was head at the Crypt Grammar School in Gloucester for eight years before joining Kent College.

It is now a thriving school with 750 pupils and a waiting list. Under his leadership they have started teaching the IB alongside A levels; have brought in a pre-nursery 0-3 years to feed into the early years; have joined with Lorendon as a satellite prep school and developed the junior school, which now has 0-3 provision; opened an international school in Dubai, with Kent College Hong Kong due to open in 2020, and others in the pipeline; evolved the international study centre; and are building a £8.4m hall. He has been seconded to help set up a multi-academy trust (the Wesley Trust). His two children were at the school.

JUNIOR SCHOOL HEAD, Mr Simon James



Simon James was appointed Head of the Junior School in 2020, previously Deputy Head of the Junior School for 2 years. He has been a teacher at Kent College since 2008 where his roles have included Head of Economics and Business and House Parent for Guilford Boarding House at the Senior School. Previously Mr James taught at the Crypt Grammar School in Gloucester followed by Horris Hill Prep School.

Mr James is passionate about individualised education at all levels given his experience in both the primary and secondary sectors. He loves to travel with his family, embracing different cultures and cuisines and has a keen interest in sport. He has a young family at Kent College Junior School.



ACADEMIC MATTERS

Junior school has brand new pre-reception 'garden cottage nursery' for 0-3 years (fully subscribed). One-to-three ratio supports children in homely environment with kitchen, playroom, soft play areas and generous outside space. Food cooked on the premises, spotlessly clean and fresh. The ultimate in childcare with little ones staying for mornings, afternoons or whole days (can be from 7:30am - 6:30pm). Early years provision for nursery and reception with separate creative areas and learning areas. Big windows and generous space inside and out, good facilities - dressing up, lots of creativity, specialist music and art.

Year 1 is a transition year - 'this is a most important year for us to consolidate learning and skills'. Homework from year 1. Setting in maths and English from year 2. Afternoons for creative subjects or themed learning - humanities, sciences, art and expressive art. Year 6 for exam preparation and developing in other ways. Healthy mix of age and gender of teachers.

In the senior school personalised timetables (300 separate timetables currently) allows for setting, choice of curriculum pathways, extended teaching time and accelerated learning programmes where appropriate. Year 7-9s in sets for core subjects; some are ready to take GCSEs early in languages or digital arts. They then may start a new language or A level language syllabus. The enormous flexibility in timetabling allows pupils to choose up to 12 subjects in almost any combination. Pre-sixth form course in year 11 possible for international pupils to improve English and take five or six GCSEs with the main student body. Sixth form sees a choice of three pathways - IB (taken by 25 per cent of students), A levels (taken by 70 per cent of students) or vocational courses (Cambridge Technicals).

The in-house international study centre (six teachers) gives intensive EAL tuition in small groups or individually to help both with English and with their studies. Learning support in dyslexia centre (three teachers) - mostly individual sessions. Awareness and testing for dyslexia was commented on by parents - 'they identified my child within weeks of arriving at Kent College though no one had mentioned it at the old school'. Needing extra help doesn't seem to have negative connotations here - 'you can be strong at lots of things even if you find writing difficult'. The individualisation of the timetable really helps - those struggling with English don't need to do another language; some do extra GCSEs; extension tuition for GREATs (gifted, really enthusiastic, able and talented).

Results are impressive for a non-selective school - average of 37 out of 45 at IB in 2018 and 67 per cent A*-B grades at A level, with 39 per cent 9-7s at GCSE. The school highlights the strength of maths results: 72 per cent A*/B in maths and 83 per cent in further maths. Value added score of 0.28 (over a quarter of a grade per subject above expectations). Pupils said, 'teachers genuinely care and give you all the time you need to succeed'.





GAMES, OPTIONS, THE ARTS

Options mentioned enthusiastically by both parents and pupils - 'I chose the school for the range of different activities'; 'the school provides good life experiences and opportunities that enhance their time in school and afterwards'.

Junior school has sport twice a week on the spacious playing fields or up at the senior school AstroTurf. There is a heated outdoor swimming pool for the summer term; all juniors learn to swim. Fixtures and every three weeks the school hosts an athletics meeting open to other local children. Emphasis in the junior school on everyone 'having a go' - so large numbers of teams and pupils told us that there was no shame in being in the E team: if you weren't very good at sport, then you would simply get extra help until you got better. 'They never get angry,' we were told by kids. 'You don't have to be the best to be in a team,' said one parent. 'They take it in turns to be captain - no one is excluded'.

Senior school students mentioned sport as a selling point. Hockey, football, netball (for girls only), cricket, tennis, swimming, athletics. Endless sports run as lunchtime and after-school clubs (including dance and archery) in 26 acres of playing fields. And talented sportspeople get extra tuition, strength and conditioning and practice time - tennis, horse riding (a team reached the NESA finals at Hickstead), football, hockey (a couple of students representing England). Very well equipped fitness room.

Fully working farm is a special feature of the school, with a number of pupils from farming families. On the timetable for years 7 and 8 as part of the curriculum. Year 4s upwards can help with lambing, grooming horses etc. But this is a real working farm providing the school with its pork sausages and lamb.

Plenty of impressive art round the school including a striking ceramic installation - a poppy shape of terracotta tiles with the names of Kent College students who fell in 20th century conflicts laid out in the quad. Spacious DT room with plenty of kit including a 3D laser printer.

Music a big feature (the executive head being a music graduate must help) with several bands (including staff bands and a folk group) and several choirs. Choristers have been on BBC Songs of Praise, pupils have entered Young Musician of the Year, been to Eisteddfod and on music tours. There is a summer opera in the grounds. Some 2019 Canterbury Festival events will take place in the new hall and students will perform.

Drama can be taken at GCSE and A level. Oh What A Lovely War was the big school musical for the WW1 centenary. Media and film studies popular and degree course choices include film and media, musical theatre, media production and creative music production.

Clubs and societies plentiful in junior and senior schools. Many run by students as the service part of IB curriculum, but also by teachers who, students tell us, 'will do anything for you and always offer to help'. Alongside sports there are e.g. electronics, enamelling, farming, gardening, debating, coding; years 7-9 must do at least two a week.

Trips include skiing, geography ('You don't have to be doing geography to go on the trip - they go to great places,' we were told), choir tours, sports tours, physics trip, language exchanges, history trip, and DofE gold went to Italy for their final hike ('much less wet than the Lake District').

BOARDERS

Very flexible boarding arrangements - around a third of pupils in the senior school board, with others using occasional wraparound care. Parents tell us that houseparents vary, though the two we met were very cheerful and warm and just the sort you would like as role models for your child. Six boarding houses with live-in staff, many of whom are also teachers. Separate junior boarding house for pupils as young as 7, but most from 9 years. Kitchens, sitting rooms, single and shared bedrooms with study areas (newer boarding houses have en-suite shower rooms). Pupils take pride in their rooms and wanted us to see the views, the pictures on their walls, the desk spaces, the way they had dressed their rooms. They said that if you act responsibly, you are given freedoms, but abusing the rules results in repercussions like having your phone taken away. Main meals taken in school; kitchenettes in boarding houses for snacks and weekends. School library and sports facilities open in the evenings and at weekends. Pupils seem happy with weekend activities - sports fixtures on Saturdays, then they can walk into town, and Saturday night is takeaway and film night. Outings every Sunday - Westfield, bowling, London Dungeons, IMAX, hiking, beach, even Disneyland Paris once. Junior school holiday clubs.



BACKGROUND AND ATMOSPHERE

Founded in 1885, senior school is walking distance to the centre of town and set in generous grounds. The junior school is a little further out, with ancient trees and views of rolling hills. Both schools have grand old buildings which, whilst elegant, may not be ideal for a modern school. So a bit of a maze of old and newer, added on buildings. All clean and warm and more cosy than shabby. Part of the Methodist Independent Schools Trust group of schools and whilst 'you would be hard pressed to find many Methodists here amongst pupils or teachers,' pupils still go to chapel twice a week. But very inclusive: 'two pupils from my boarding house had meals made to take to their rooms for after the fast during Ramadan'.

Lunch cooked on site with plenty of choice: 'they have vegan options because four children in my year are vegan'. Teachers and pupils eat together. Popular snack shop very well used by parents and pupils at break times. Teachers a very stable cohort - possibly too stable - with 20 and 30 years of service not uncommon.

PASTORAL CARE, WELL-BEING AND DISCIPLINE

The school houses help to build bonds between age groups and between boarders and day pupils. A sense of family pervades. Pupils have a range of adults they can, and do, speak to about concerns - boarding house staff, the chaplain, the head of pastoral care, their tutors, the school nurse; or they can self refer to the weekly school counsellor.

We witnessed immaculate good behaviour as we toured the school - no pushing or shoving, doors opened and plenty of pleases and thank yous. Junior pupils told us that there is no bullying and 'we are kind to each other', and senior pupils felt they all look out for each other. Teachers said that pupils need to learn from their mistakes and may be put on a pastoral support plan or are expected to work out their own suitable sanctions. Some irritations between girls in boarding houses, according to parents, but nothing the houseparents couldn't sort out. Parents said they 'are bombarded with information from the school - good if your children don't always tell you what is going on'. One working mother would have loved to have earlier notice of events so as to be sure to attend.



PUPILS AND PARENTS

About two-thirds from Canterbury and surroundings, with school buses serving seven different routes and shuttle buses from Canterbury station. A third international - about a third of these from Europe, a third from Asia, with some 42 nations represented in all - a different country's flag hung outside the school each day. The new fast train to London has changed the demographic, with parents working in London and appreciating the long day cover (7.30am to 6.30pm possible) and the possibility of flexible boarding.

ENTRANCE

About half of the children from the garden cottage nursery move on to early years, all the early years pupils stay on for junior school and from there almost all go to the senior school. A further 35 or so pupils join year 7 from the feeder prep school Lorendon or other local schools. Second large entry point at sixth form. Placement assessments to decide on sets when pupils first arrive, otherwise non-selective - 'we have only ever turned away two prospective students in the last eight years' - though they won't take pupils if they don't think they can accommodate their special needs. One junior pupil said 'it wouldn't suit a person who minds about mud'. Ten places for students coming just for a term or two ('it introduces them to what the school offers and most stay on or will come back as full time students later').

EXIT

A third to Russell Group universities (and one pupil to Oxford in 2018) and the most of the rest to UK unis with a couple off abroad (Koblensk, North Carolina). Particularly wide range of subjects including rural land management, product design, business, economics and psychology as well as the creative courses such as film studies and fashion.

MONEY MATTERS

Fees include meals and individual MacBook but not specialist lessons in the dyslexia support centre, EAL lessons or music. However, pupils told us that teachers are always available to give you extra help at any time: 'there are fixed clinics but teachers will always find a time to see you - and I don't think they are even paid for it'. Scholarships of 25 per cent (art, drama, music, academic, design, sport) and bursaries up to a maximum of 50 per cent (Forces allowance gives a 90 per cent reduction).

COME AND VISIT US

We strongly encourage prospective pupils and parents to come and look around our school, and to meet our friendly staff and pupils. There are various opportunities to do this:

Open days and information evening

Our Senior School Open Morning is held at the end of September every year. There are various Information Evenings throughout the year and all prospective pupils and parents are warmly invited to attend these.

Personal visits

A personal visit allows pupils and parents to see the school on a normal working day, to visit our facilities, and to meet our pupils and staff. You will be given a tour of the school by a pupil, and will then have the opportunity to meet the Head Master and one of the Admissions staff. Personal visits are individualised to suit your requirements, and typically last two hours.

Taster days

A taster day is the best way for your child to get a feel for our school. He or she will be paired with a buddy, and will spend the day with their potential year group.

Plays, concerts and other events

Every year Kent College hosts a wide range of events including concerts, drama productions, sports events and community events such as our Bonfire Night Fireworks Display. These events are open to prospective pupils and parents.

We look forward to welcoming you to Kent College.

Arrange a visit by calling us on +44 (0) 1227 763231 or email admissions@kentcollege.co.uk





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