



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

KING EDWARD VI HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

STANDARD INSPECTION

FINAL VISIT

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

King Edward VI High School for Girls

Full Name of School	King Edward VI High School for Girls
DCSF Number	330/6077
Registered Charity Number	529051
Address	King Edward VI High School for Girls Edgbaston Park Road Birmingham West Midlands B15 2UB
Telephone Number	01214 721 834
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Email Address	admissions@kehs.co.uk
Principal	Miss Sarah H Evans
Chair of Governors	Mr David Holmes
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	551
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Number of Day Pupils	551
Inspection date	16 Mar 2010 to 17 Mar 2010
Final (team) visit	26 Apr 2010 to 28 Apr 2010

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2003.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 King Edward VI High School for Girls was established in 1883 as a member of an educational foundation that has served the people of Birmingham since 1552. The school draws its pupils from more than 100 schools across a wide area of the Midlands, and it is highly selective. It aims to be 'distinctive in its strong academic emphasis, within a framework of the moral, social, aesthetic and spiritual development of the individual.' Some facilities and some teaching at A level are shared with the neighbouring King Edward's School for boys, which is part of the same foundation.
- 1.2 Since the time of the previous inspection, in November 2003, the school has reorganised its teaching arrangements for Year 7 and Year 8 into four classes each, in place of three. It has introduced new courses in the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) as well as additional subjects at A level and formal programmes to increase opportunities for independent learning, such as the AQA Baccalaureate. It has extended its facilities for teaching the sixth form, improved its classrooms for the teaching of modern foreign languages and approved a new and extensive building programme for the performing arts. It has also expanded significantly its provision for information and communications technology (ICT). The Foundation has revised its arrangements for governance, so that its two independent schools have more direct and specific access to educational resources and guidance.
- 1.3 Currently the school has 551 pupils, of whom 159 are in its sixth form. Admission to Year 7 is by the school's own examination in English, mathematics and reasoning skills. Standardised assessment shows that the average ability of the pupils is far above the national average. A small number of pupils leave the school after their GCSE examinations and a small number join. The ability of pupils in the sixth form is well above the national average of sixth-form pupils in all secondary schools. The school identifies five pupils as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), who are supported informally within the school. The cultural and ethnic mix of the school is wide, reflecting the regional Birmingham community. All pupils are wholly fluent in English so that none receives support for English being an additional language (EAL) to that normally spoken at home.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Third Form	Year 7
Lower Fourth	Year 8
Upper Fourth	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' achievement throughout the school is excellent. Their attitudes to study and the standards of their learning and skills are outstanding. In all subjects, the pupils are keen on their work, they are excited by their learning and they seek eagerly after understanding and success. Progress is rapid so that results in public examinations are excellent, far above the average achieved by pupils in all maintained schools and well above those of girls and boys in all maintained selective schools. Throughout the school, pupils are alert, focus well and share actively in the common enterprise of learning and understanding. Teachers provide strong encouragement to excellence and to bold and adventurous thinking. The quality of their marking and comment is excellent. Support for pupils with LDD is careful and thorough.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. They are actively engaged in their school and they work very well with their teachers. They propose significant measures that the school leaders share and implement, for example in catering arrangements and provision, in the withdrawal of a house structure and in their commitment to charitable work and fund-raising. Pupils engage strongly in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They promote environmental issues and they enjoy the multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character of their school. They are keen to initiate, to support and to participate. They share a real sense of ownership of their school and a responsibility for its success.
- 2.3 The quality of governance and that of leadership and management in the school are excellent. The structures of governance within the Foundation have been revised successfully since the last inspection so that governors recognise better the particular character and needs of the independent schools within it. They are careful in their responsibility for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. They review all policies carefully and they ensure compliance. The quality of leadership and of management in the school is excellent. It is sensitive, it is comprehensive and it is shared. It seeks the success of the school by the engagement of all members in a common enterprise of learning and growing, and its achievement is outstanding. The school is clear in the pursuit of its aims and it has met well all the recommendations made at the time of the last inspection. The views of parents and pupils are highly favourable across the full range of the school's current provision and arrangements.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.

(ii) Recommended action

- 2.5 The school is advised to:

1. continue to provide the highest challenges and the widest engagement for all.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Pupils obtain excellent results in public examinations when compared with national averages for maintained schools. The quality of the pupils' achievements is outstanding, as is that of their learning, attitudes and skills. The school aims to be distinctive in its strong academic emphasis, and to inspire both a love of learning for its own sake and a pursuit of excellence in school and beyond. All this it achieves extremely well. In lessons, in informal conversation and exchanges, and by their engagement in extra-curricular activities and community service, pupils display outstanding ability. They share also an infectious enthusiasm for learning and an eagerness to challenge both themselves and each other to secure the highest standards. They value learning highly, for its own sake and for the pleasure it gives.
- 3.2 Pupils recognise well the importance of independent study and they follow keenly programmes of personal decision making, citizenship and 'widening horizons'. They borrow more than 8000 books each year from the school library, and sixth formers access also the resources of the nearby university. Throughout the school, the quality of learning and of progress is excellent. This is reflected, in part, in pupils' achievement in public examinations. Results at GCSE and IGCSE are excellent, far above the national average of pupils in all maintained schools and well above the average of pupils in maintained selective schools. These high standards, and these significant comparisons, are repeated at A-level.
- 3.3 The pupils demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and they engage keenly in independent research and thinking. This is well advanced on their practice at the time of the last inspection in 2003. The pupils are articulate and confident in discussion. They perform best when presented with open questions and when they are called upon to reason and demonstrate their solutions. They enjoy their lessons. Written work is thoroughly well organised and carefully presented, supported by excellent note-making skills. Pupils use ICT proficiently in many subjects, to enhance their learning and that of their peers. They are attentive, well motivated and eager for intellectual challenge. Their ability to work collaboratively and to support each other in their learning is a significant strength of the school.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.4 The contribution of the school's curricular and extra-curricular provision to the quality of pupils' learning and achievement is excellent. So too are its extensive links with communities close to the school and afar.
- 3.5 Pupils enjoy and benefit from a wide and challenging academic curriculum. They all study Latin to GCSE and have opportunity also to study three modern foreign languages, as well as IGCSE mathematics and physics. Learning across a range of subjects in the sixth form is shared successfully with the neighbouring boys' school within the King Edward's Foundation. Pupils benefit from highly informed careers advice that enables a combination of subjects suited to each pupil's interest and ambition.

- 3.6 Support for those with LDD is delivered by learning mentors, who provide guidance, assistance and effective encouragement. This has advanced significantly since the time of the last inspection. So too has the school's provision and use of ICT resources, which now enhance the teaching and pupils' learning across the full range of the curriculum.
- 3.7 The school succeeds extremely well in its aims to complement the formal curriculum with a full range of extra-curricular activities and to provide also opportunities for service to others. Pupils' engagement is strong and achievement is high. A wide range of competitive sports is matched by extensive cultural and recreational activities such as music, dance and drama. Academic clubs include astronomy, which has engaged pupils in European visits as part of the international Comenius project. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme is extensive and successful, with significant achievement at all levels every year.
- 3.8 The school reaches out strongly to the local community, by work and by financial support. For example, a highly effective and popular evening class in mathematics assists sixth form pupils from maintained schools in their A-level studies, and the school offers them assistance also with applications to university. Every form undertakes charitable fund-raising for a chosen cause. Pupils accept this readily and commit themselves strongly to it. The school monitors pupil profiles so that commitment is secure but not excessive. Thereby a habit of community engagement and support is established to the benefit of many.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 The quality of teaching throughout the school is excellent. It enables the rapid progress made by all pupils. Teachers are knowledgeable, well prepared for their lessons and informed about the needs of their pupils. Teachers plan carefully and they access resources readily. Their contribution to the pupils' learning and success is outstanding. The high quality of teaching was recognised in the last report as a strength of the school and it continues to be so. By its frequent monitoring of the quality of teaching, as well as of pupils' learning, the school has established a practice of probing enquiry and clear investigation in lessons, rather than of delivery and acceptance. This has been welcomed by the pupils, who consequently participate eagerly and successfully. They expect to be heard and to carry forward the learning of the group.
- 3.10 The quality of assessment is outstanding. It is careful and it is thorough. It includes self-marking, peer-marking and shared marking so that each pupil recognises what is expected, what is missing and what might be improved. Marking is to a very high standard. It is also carefully and regularly monitored. It is identified by the school leaders as an important part of teaching and of learning, so that adequate time is allowed for it. Equally, members of each subject department regularly mark together so that best practice is identified and shared. Each teaching department undertakes an annual review of its teaching, part of a programme of professional development that includes also a regular 'Teaching and Learning Newsletter'. Thus all teachers pursue the highest standards and in many lessons they achieve them.
- 3.11 The school encourages outside support for its teaching so that regular lunch-time sessions are arranged with university academics. These include presentations of research papers and essays by pupils. Some teaching, notably in the sixth form, is shared with the adjacent King Edward's School for boys within the same foundation. This extends to public productions in drama and music.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. The school succeeds extremely well in its aim to provide a clear framework for the moral, social, aesthetic and spiritual development of the individual. Pupils have wide interests and they enjoy close friendships. They are also very supportive of their school and of each other. A strong atmosphere of individual respect and mutual support pervades the school, irrespective of race, religion, background or ability.
- 4.2 Outstanding lessons in religious studies, as well as regular and frequent assemblies of high quality, appropriate to each age group, ensure that all pupils develop well spiritually. Pupils understand clearly the importance of faith in their lives, and they are keen to organise assemblies on important religious aspects as well as to attend them. They openly respect all creeds. They also celebrate all religious festivals appropriately and the school offers a prayer room on request.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral awareness is excellent. Each is respectful of the other and of those who have authority or seniority over them. A Year 9 pupil commented simply that 'the sixth form are one step down from teachers, so if they tell us off we do as we are told.' The pupils demonstrate their concern for those less fortunate than themselves by outstanding charity work, including fund-raising events and publicity at assemblies. They discuss human rights and moral issues openly and strongly.
- 4.4 The pupils' social development is excellent. Tutor groups are loyal associations within each year group who remain together for the first five years in the school. The school council is active and includes members from each tutor group. Its views are listened to and generally supported by both the pupils and the staff. It is supplemented by a food council and by a sixth form committee. All these groups exercise responsibility carefully and respectfully. Links across the year-groups are encouraged by the attachment of senior pupils to lower groups and by their service as sports coaches, debating leaders and in other roles. Junior pupils reported their pleasure and confidence in these senior pupils.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural development and success is demonstrated in the high quality and frequent presentations of musical and dramatic events, and by the numerous clubs and societies. Regular assemblies allow pupils time to share their experiences of travel and foreign encounters. Pupils show openly their cultural awareness and respect for others of different backgrounds and associations to themselves. The school dining hall is a venue for themed cultural lunches, enjoyed by all pupils.
- 4.6 In their responses to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils showed themselves highly appreciative and supportive of all aspects of the school's provision. In discussions with pupils, inspectors found girls excited by their study, committed to learning and to wide participation in all aspects of life at school, and highly appreciative of the encouragement and care which they receive. They indicated also a strong sense of personal value within the school and of teachers' appreciation of their efforts and successes.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care, and of the school's arrangements for the care and guidance of all its pupils, is excellent. It is comprehensive, sensitive and wholly effective. Pupils value this support and they significantly extend it by the quality of their care for each other. Form tutors provide the main formal contact for pupils, but the school encourages them to talk to whoever they feel most confident with. The appointment of pastoral coordinators for each year below the sixth form, and more frequent individual interviews, have strengthened the school's provision since the time of the last inspection.
- 4.8 Relationships between staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, are outstanding. The school expects and receives good behaviour from all its pupils. Above all it receives strong and general support in securing a caring and mutually considerate community. Pupils are open, they are friendly, and they are highly considerate of one another and of teachers and visitors. The pupils listen carefully to each other, they respect each other's beliefs and feelings and they discuss concerns openly and frankly. An excellent programme of personal decision making, taught by committed staff, guides younger pupils in matters such as cyber abuse, first aid, self defence and domestic violence. The quality of careers advice too is outstanding. The careers centre is well resourced and pupils use it carefully in deciding subject preferences and training needs.
- 4.9 The school has appropriate policies to ensure that good behaviour is maintained and to guard each pupil from harassment or bullying. It acts promptly against unacceptable behaviour on the rare occasions this happens. The safeguarding policy is fully compliant and it is implemented successfully. Training in child protection is thorough and reviewed regularly. Arrangements for the health and safety of all pupils are securely in place. They include excellent medical care, which includes a doctor's visit to the school each week and a medical examination for each pupil three times during their school career. Provision for pupils who are taken ill is excellent. The school has taken careful steps to be secure from intrusion and protected from traffic movement.
- 4.10 All appropriate measures have been taken to reduce risk from hazards, including fire. The school has a detailed plan to improve access for those with disabilities. Admission and attendance registers are carefully maintained, stored appropriately and readily accessible.
- 4.11 The school's catering provision is excellent. It is attentive to the needs and cultural diversity of all pupils and it strongly encourages healthy eating. Meals are well supervised, relaxing and pleasant occasions. Pupils value the school's provision greatly and they use it extensively. All pupils participate regularly and keenly in sport and physical exercise.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The Foundation provides carefully and well for the financial stability and needs of the school, including a generous funding of bursaries. Since the time of the last inspection it has significantly enhanced the roles of the Independent Schools Governing Body within the Foundation to provide more directly for the two independent schools. This has led to an improved exchange of communication. It ranges from regular visits to the school by governors, which include lesson observation, to invited attendance by teachers at committee meetings discussing education or development.
- 5.2 The governors are carefully and fully informed on the school. They have addressed well all recommendations made at the time of the last inspection, including the extensive provision of excellent ICT facilities. They have reviewed all policies and undertaken comprehensive risk assessments to ensure the welfare, health and safety of all pupils. They have planned for new building and they have encouraged the expansion of links with the neighbouring boys' school, whilst allowing a difference in provision and in character between the two schools. They regularly appraise the performance of the principal. They have monitored and encouraged high attainment and excellent pastoral care. The school community is consequently secure, happy, successful and exciting.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 The quality of leadership and management in the school is excellent. It is clear in its objective to secure an academic school for able pupils who are keen to learn and to share their evident talents, both with each other and with the community at large. The consequent energy is directed purposefully and strongly, so that the school community is vital and enthusiastic across the full range of activity. Moreover, opportunities abound for pupils to serve those beyond the school, and they use these well.
- 5.4 The school's leadership is thoroughly sensitive and it is wholly caring. Planning is confident and it is also shared successfully. The school's leaders work together outstandingly well so that the school achieves mutually supportive and collaborative management. Its leaders are skilful in identifying the school's needs and in sharing these with their colleagues and the pupils. They work hard for a highly academic school which is engaged also in serving the best interests of the community of Birmingham. The curriculum is wide. It is also managed skilfully to provide an appropriate subject choice for each pupil. The teaching is carefully monitored and supported so that learning and achievement are excellent. The quality of assessment and its use to improve learning has greatly improved since the last inspection to an exemplary standard. The provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities and the pupils' engagement in them are outstanding.

- 5.5 The quality of pastoral leadership, arranged through a team of co-ordinators appropriate to each age group, is equally strong and equally successful. The school provides generous time for programmes of personal development and personal decision making. The general studies programme, delivered by a wide range of teachers, which includes the principal and her senior managers, indicates to all the strong commitment of the school to life-long learning beyond the acquisition of skills and qualifications. Throughout the full range of school activity, leadership and management are committed, vigorous, shared and supported. Staff are carefully recruited and trained well in their roles of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. This is shared across the school so that all provide genuine care for each individual.
- 5.6 The administration of the school is highly efficient. Some aspects are provided well through the Foundation Office, housed on the school site. Financial management is careful and thorough. The reception of visitors is friendly and understanding. All checks on the suitability of governors, staff and volunteers are carried out meticulously. Catering and the promotion of healthy eating are to a high standard; the grounds are carefully maintained; security and cleaning are highly effective.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.7 The quality of the school's links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. It is frequent, regular, mutually informative and supportive. Formal and informal consultation takes place regularly on central issues such as teaching and learning, the perceived reputation of the school, its communications and its values. The school arranges pastoral information evenings as well as feedback sessions on pupils' progress or their selection of subjects for continued study. A written progress report is provided on each pupil each year and an extensive end-of-year report gives detailed, specific and comprehensive comment. Newsletters to parents are highly informative as well as of excellent quality. The school deals with parental concerns promptly and sensitively.
- 5.8 Parents, carers and guardians show a strong willingness to be involved in the school's extra-curricular activities, as well as in careers guidance, formal interview practice and general studies. Parents thereby are successfully involved in the work of the school and informed of the progress of their children and the school's provision for them. Parents' responses to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire showed a very high level of satisfaction across the full range of school activity. Each parent respondent agreed that the teaching helped their child to make progress, the vast majority being in strong support of the school. Inspectors endorsed the high levels of praise contained within the questionnaires. There were no areas of concern raised by any significant number of parents.
- 5.9 The school enjoys a strong parents' association, which assists the school on public occasions, arranges social events and keeps parents informed of developments within the school, for example on pastoral issues and a review of travel between home and school. The school is active in promoting contacts with parents, by way of the internet and email. It values the mutually supportive exchange of information.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal and informal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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