

King Edward VI Handsworth School

Rose Hill Road, Birmingham, B21 9AR

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Outstanding 1
Achievement of pupils	Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching	Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management	Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- This is a high performing school where students make rapid progress and reach exceptionally high standards.
- The sixth form is outstanding. Students maintain their high attainment levels as a result of the consistently outstanding teaching and a curriculum that is closely matched to their needs and aspirations.
- Teaching is of a consistent high quality. Teachers have high expectations of their students. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge inspires and engages students in their learning.
- Behaviour is immaculate in lessons. Girls show a thirst for learning. They told inspectors how the school enabled them to thrive and develop as individuals. Behaviour around school is also exemplary.
- Attendance rates are well above average.
- The school strives to keep its students safe and ensures that they are provided with the information they need to keep themselves safe.
- The headteacher is an excellent role model for the girls. She and her senior team lead by example and are relentless in their demands for high-quality performance from all staff. Procedures to ensure that teaching quality is consistently high are extremely thorough.
- Subject leadership is very strong. Leaders take an active part in driving improvement and ensuring that high standards are sustained.
- The inspirational learning environment and the well-planned curriculum enable students not only to develop academically, but also to develop creativity, self-confidence and to grow as individuals.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 33 lessons, 24 of which were seen together with senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, governors, a representative from the King Edward VI Foundation and staff, including subject and pastoral leaders.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at policies, self-evaluation and development planning, monitoring records, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of the 31 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, in addition to the school’s own survey of parents’ and carers’ views.
- The first day of the inspection coincided with a curriculum enrichment day when several year groups were out of school on trips, and other activities in school were led by external providers.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Anne White	Additional Inspector
Kevin Harrison	Additional Inspector
Richard Boswell	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- King Edward VI Handsworth School converted to become an academy on 1 August 2011. When its predecessor school, of the same name, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding.
- The school is part of the King Edward VI Foundation.
- This all-girls selective school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above the national average with the largest group being of Indian heritage. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is also above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is very low, and none are supported at school action.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for some students including those in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average.
- No students attend any offsite alternative provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in the sixth form general studies course to match that in other subjects by:
 - raising the profile of the course so that students understand its value in broadening their education and fully apply their study skills to this subject
 - enabling the new subject leader to drive improvement in provision and outcomes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is outstanding

- Students start at the school with skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that are well above average. That means that none are eligible for Year 7 'catch up' funding. By the end of Year 11, the proportion of students gaining five A* to C GCSE passes including English and mathematics is consistently high. In 2013, 100% of students achieved this goal. The proportion of students achieving the highest grades (A* and A grades) in all subjects is consistently high.
- Students make exceptional progress. They were keen to tell inspectors how much the school encourages and supports them in their learning and how the school enables them to flourish. One commented, 'I value being with people who enjoy learning, as the school provides the environment to succeed.' Almost all students make expected progress in both English and mathematics and a very high proportion make more than expected progress in these subjects compared to national figures. There is no significant difference between the rates of progress of students from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Students who speak English as an additional language are referred to as 'bilingual' and achieve equally as well as other groups. However, the school tracks their progress carefully, recognising that these students may need extra support in developing their vocabulary as they progress through the school. The very few disabled students and those who have special educational needs make exceptional progress as a result of the outstanding teaching and support that they receive.
- There is a strong focus on the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills across all subjects, where students are frequently encouraged to read out loud. Students show a love of reading and the inspirational school library building is very well used. This well-equipped new building is light and airy, overlooking the playing fields, providing space, including on benches outside, for students to enjoy their reading and other studies.
- Students are constantly encouraged to find things out for themselves and students told inspectors how much they value the fact that they not only are able to develop academically but also are able to develop their understanding of how to learn. Students know what they need to do to achieve a high-level answer and they seek to extend their own learning through research and wider reading.
- All students are now entered for GCSE mathematics in their final year in order to maximise teaching time, with the highest attaining students having the opportunity to broaden their mathematical studies during the course, to extend their understanding further.
- Students for whom the pupil premium provides additional funding make significantly better progress and attain well above this group nationally in both English and mathematics. Year on year, there is virtually no attainment gap between this group and their peers. In 2013, they were less than half a term behind their peers in English but the same amount above them in mathematics. There is likewise no pattern of different rates of progress between this group and their peers. The school's current progress data shows that eligible students are making consistently outstanding progress throughout the school.
- The additional pupil premium funding is used to ensure that these students are fully included in the life of the school. This includes providing funding for school uniform, for music tuition, for trips and providing travel grants.

- Achievement in the sixth form is exceptional. Attainment at A and AS level is amongst the highest in the country. It improved further from 2012 to 2013. The minimum requirement for entry to the sixth form is five grade A's at GCSE level, and all are expected to have gained a good pass in English and mathematics. All groups of students continue to make outstanding progress in their academic subjects while developing a wide range of skills for university and later life. Attitudes to learning are exemplary and students learn to be self-reliant and resilient.
- In comparison with other subjects, results in general studies are not as high. During the inspection, it was evident that girls were not affording this subject the same value as other subjects. They do not apply their study skills to this subject with the same enthusiasm as their other subjects.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- The rapid progress made by students in all subjects and year groups, including the sixth form, and the high standards they reach, show that the quality of teaching is outstanding. Observations during the inspection confirmed that a high proportion of teaching is outstanding and all is at least consistently good.
- Students expressed how much they value the support that their teachers provide, commenting, 'We trust them and know that they love what they do.'
- Teachers know their students very well and have very high expectations of what each student can achieve. They are highly aware of the students who are eligible for pupil premium funding within their classes and target them to ensure that they achieve equally as well as other students.
- The planning of all lessons includes a strong focus on building learning habits so that students develop curiosity, confidence and the ability to find things out for themselves. For example, in a Year 13 art lesson where the teaching was outstanding, students were introduced to their assessment task by being quickly immersed into a practical activity. Here they used the range of materials provided to draw inspiration, being constantly encouraged to think for themselves any ideas as to how they could develop their final project. They were all provided with success criteria, and a 'progress line' for the task, that enabled them to evaluate and record their own steps to success.
- Learning is fast paced. Teachers plan a variety of tasks that enable students to build their learning progressively through the lesson, from recapping what they already know, to developing and applying new skills or understanding. Often well-planned starter activities challenge students to identify for themselves the learning objective for the lesson. For example, in a Year 8 German lesson, the teacher required students to identify what they would expect to see in a sentence where the past tense had been used. This enabled students to think about what they already knew before developing their understanding of the perfect and imperfect tenses, and applying this new learning in their speaking and writing.
- In most lessons, students are encouraged to collaborate in groups or pairs, enabling the development of teamwork. Students show great enjoyment and excitement in working like this, discussing their learning and sharing ideas. This often enables them to develop their creativity. For example, during the inspection, Year 8 students worked in groups to respond to a pirate story. This included many creative activities such as composing a seascape in music, making a treasure chest in art or exploring the pirates' galleon through physical theatre. This resulted in some highly inventive responses, and promoted very well students' spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development.

- Assessment during lessons and through marking is of high quality, so that students have a clear understanding of how to improve. They frequently have the opportunity of using the assessment criteria to evaluate their own or each other's work, further promoting their independence.
- Home study is a key element to the successful learning and teaching, and home learning tasks provide further opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. They are polite and courteous, articulate, confident and mature. They show a high level of respect for each other and for adults. They mix well with each other regardless of background or religion. Parents and students agree that behaviour is of a consistently high standard.
- Students express pride in their school and say how much they value the experiences that they are offered, one commenting, 'The school builds our self-confidence to enable us to strive to achieve and secure a successful future.'
- Behaviour around the spacious school grounds and in the 'play room' is calm and orderly but highly sociable. Students say that it is, 'OK to be different'. Year 8 students and staff were seen walking around the school dressed as pirates during the curriculum day, while staff say it is common to see students sitting under a tree with a good book.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is outstanding. Bullying is rare and students told inspectors how seriously this or any racism is viewed and is swiftly and robustly dealt with. Students have a very good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including from cyber-bullying and personal safety. The curriculum day included opportunities to develop assertiveness and a talk from the police about knife crime. Sixth form students, about to leave home for university, experienced a wide variety of relevant activities, including self-defence.
- All students are provided with opportunities to take roles of responsibility through the school council, leading assemblies and organising charity fundraising. Sixth form students take a leading role within the school, supporting and leading younger ones through acting as prefects and house captains, and organising sports and dance competitions. They told inspectors that their vision is to change the media view of Birmingham youth through volunteering.
- Attendance rates are high, and, despite the long distances between some buildings, students are punctual to lessons.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher is dynamic, determined and relentless in her drive to ensure that the high standards of this high-achieving school are maintained and improved. She provides an excellent role model for the girls in her professional leadership. She is supported by a strong senior team, who monitor all aspects of the school's work very effectively, leading by example and having high expectations of students and staff.
- Leaders promote and maintain high-quality teaching through robust systems and well-planned opportunities for professional development that are closely matched to individual teachers'

needs. Subject leaders are closely involved in monitoring the quality of teaching, and, through rigorous performance management, all teachers are closely held to account for the progress made in their classes. Teachers are encouraged to explore aspects of learning in groups and report back to their colleagues in order to share good practice. For example, they research methods of encouraging investigative skills, promoting curiosity and risk taking. This creates an environment where all strive to improve their performance. Newly qualified teachers are well supported and have already demonstrated improvement.

- Subject and pastoral leadership is strong. Leaders feel well supported by their line managers and have well-focused action plans to further improve achievement. They are provided with the opportunity to further their professional development by shadowing senior leaders to build their leadership capacity.
- The school knows itself well but is not complacent. Leaders are quick to identify any areas of underperformance, for example in general studies, and take firm action to address this. They are now addressing the quality of teaching in this subject, and have appointed a new subject leader to better enthuse the girls and to drive improvement. They are constantly seeking ways of extending access to the school by increasing the school's intake, particularly for students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding, and exploring ways in which this group of students can be supported by the school during the application process.
- Systems for tracking students' progress are highly sophisticated, enabling any underachievement to be identified and addressed. This ensures that all students are included, that there is equal opportunity for all and there is no discrimination. In addition to the analysis of the progress of different groups of students, it was clear to inspectors that all students are valued and cared for as individuals.
- The curriculum offered is broad and flexible to meet changing examination requirements. The school is ensuring that students experience a balance of subjects that enables them to achieve their long-term goals, in addition to promoting opportunities for creativity. The care for the individual is exemplified by the school's willingness to make curriculum adjustments to meet the needs, for example, of talented sportswomen or those who are facing challenging circumstances. The 16–19 study programme in the sixth form is closely matched to the needs and aspirations of the students, who all follow academic Level 3 courses.
- The enrichment opportunities are extensive, including the very highest level of sporting and musical performance, and academic, cultural and debating groups. Opportunities include performing in a musical in partnership with the boys' school. Girls show great enjoyment in taking part in dance activities in the purpose-built studio where they can improve their own performance as a result of watching themselves in the mirrored walls. The quality of performance of the elite group of dhol drummers is exceptional, and this group regularly represents the school by performing at prestigious events in the community.
- The uptake of these activities is closely monitored, and senior students are aware of the importance of engaging in interests beyond their school subjects. Regular curriculum enrichment days include a variety of trips and events to provide this balance to the high level of academic study. Sixth form students are provided with opportunities to prepare for university life through such activities as cooking, personal fitness and managing finance.
- The new leader of the sixth form is providing outstanding leadership and management of this part of the school. Students' progress is closely monitored and each department held to account. Impartial and independent careers advice is excellent, and students receive high-quality guidance on university application. The vast majority of girls secure places of first choice, many

going to Russell Group universities and a growing number to Oxbridge. Many are accepted for the most selective courses; for example, medicine and law. Students eligible for the pupil premium are further supported by being encouraged and supported in their university application and there is a strong school focus on raising the aspirations of these students.

- The school seeks to engage with parents and fully involve them in their daughter's education. In addition to frequent reports on performance, congratulations are communicated to celebrate success. The school is quick to respond to parental suggestions.
- The King Edward VI Foundation provides close support for governors and enables close partnerships between each of the schools' leaders.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet current government requirements.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors make a strong contribution to the leadership of the school. They share the vision for the future of the school and express pride in what the school is able to do for the girls' development, emotionally, academically and socially. Governors use their expertise to scrutinise the school's work. They are knowledgeable about its performance and are quick to interrogate even the smallest drop in performance and to check on the impact of actions taken to address any issue. Governors know about the quality of teaching and check that salary progression is linked to performance. They undertake appropriate training, including through that provided by the Foundation. They check carefully that the pupil premium additional funding is ensuring that eligible students are fully included and achieve their full potential.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	137047
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	440675

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Female
Number of pupils on the school roll	904
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	268
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sharon Roberts
Headteacher	Elisabeth Wager
Date of previous school inspection	16 April 2008
Telephone number	0121 554 2342
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