

King Edward VI Handsworth School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103551
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308355
Inspection dates	16 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Kevin Sheldrick HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	688
Sixth form	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr RA Mansell FRICS
Headteacher	Dr Elspeth V Inch OBE
Date of previous school inspection	21–25 February 2005
School address	Rose Hill Road Handsworth Birmingham B21 9AR
Telephone number	0121 5542342
Fax number	0121 5543879

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the achievement of students, the quality of teaching and learning, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Evidence was gathered from published assessment data, the school's own records, parents' questionnaires, lesson observations and interviews with staff and students. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This average-size school selects students from a wide area centred on Handsworth, Birmingham. Well below average numbers of students are eligible for free school meals. Students come from a range of background; about a third are White British, a third Indian Asian, and others come from a range of ethnic backgrounds. On entry to the school, attainment is well above average. About a quarter have a first language other than English, although none is at the early stages of learning English. The school has only a few students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The school gained performing arts specialist status in 2003.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This school provides an outstandingly effective all-round education. Attainment is well above average and examination results are consistently very high. In 2007 every student gained five A* to C GCSEs, including English and mathematics. For many years, the majority of students have obtained A* and A grade passes in their GCSE examinations. Results are similarly impressive in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 3. In Years 7 to 9 increased student progress has led to a steady rise in results at this key stage. Achievement is outstanding because the school does so well in ensuring that every student, including a few with learning difficulties, makes consistently good progress. Despite this impressive record of academic success, there is no hint of complacency.

Teaching and learning are outstanding and have improved since the last inspection. Staff are constantly refining their approaches to teaching in order to develop students' personal qualities, whilst striving for academic excellence. There is an excitement in the school about learning. Excellent relationships result in teachers responding to the feedback students are encouraged to give about lessons. Staff and students use information and communication technology well to enhance learning. Lessons have a very good mix of activity to ensure that students are actively involved, work collaboratively and develop as independent learners. The school ethos ensures all in the school community have high expectations. Effective lessons in the first few years enable students to improve the management of their own learning. As a result, students are being better prepared to handle challenging targets without feeling too much pressure, particularly in Year 11.

The school has increased student enjoyment by using its performing arts specialist status to broaden the already outstanding curriculum. Students have excellent opportunities to be creative and to participate in dance, drama, fashion and musical activity. Many of these activities have the added advantage of increasing awareness of different cultures and enhancing relationships between different ethnic groups in the school and community. Almost all students take advantage of the very wide range of extra-curricular activities offered, including a good number led by the school's sixth formers. Students have excellent opportunities to contribute to improving the school and community. The school raises large amounts for charity, and voluntary work further promotes students' leadership skills. For instance, students and staff organise sports activity in the local primary school. The school council is valued because it operates in a school ethos that takes students' views very seriously. Work-related learning and advice are successful in encouraging students to broaden their horizons about future careers.

Care, guidance and support are very effective in ensuring all learners achieve well. Safeguarding, child protection and risk assessment procedures ensure a safe environment. Students appreciate the comprehensive support they receive from their form tutors, sixth formers appointed to each class and members of the management team. The school has developed a first-rate approach to monitoring student progress. This identifies at a very early stage any dips in performance and makes clear the responses needed to correct the situation. The school is very effective in ensuring students know how they can improve. As a result of this outstanding provision, students' personal development is second to none. Students live healthy

lives, behave impeccably and develop all the skills needed to succeed in the future. Attendance and punctuality are excellent.

Ultimately, highly effective leadership explains the superb outcomes achieved by the school. Governors bring great expertise and their sharp insight plays a significant role in improving the school. Governors lead important work, contributing to the very clear, shared vision. The senior leadership team is refreshingly honest about all aspects of the school. The headteacher gets the best out of a talented senior leadership team by encouraging high-level critical debate. The school's self-review is accurate and the systems for monitoring the work of the school are extremely thorough. Crucially, these systems result in improvements for students. Inspectors found impressive evidence of how well the school ensures training improves teaching. At middle leadership level, there are major strengths but there are inconsistencies that at times slow the rate of improvement. The school's improvement planning does not contain enough outcomes that are measurable to aid the monitoring of progress. Not surprisingly, almost all parents responding to the questionnaire expressed very positive views about the school. The school has recognised that further improvement will come through even greater involvement of students and parents in the life of the school. The very good improvement made in recent years and the astute self-review demonstrate the school has an outstanding capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is highly effective. Almost all students in Year 11 go into the sixth form, together with a small number from other schools. Students new to the school settle quickly and achieve well. Achievement overall is outstanding, resulting in standards that regularly ensure the school is ranked amongst the highest attaining schools nationally. The vast majority of students achieve the highest grades and go on to succeed in higher education. The sixth form is distinct from the main school but remains very much part of it. Students appreciate being treated as adults and recognise how effectively the school has prepared them as independent learners. The school supports the students in developing the skills needed to succeed in higher education, for instance, through the phased introduction of the flexible use of study periods. Teaching is outstanding in the sixth form for the same reasons as it is in the main school. The sixth formers interviewed, whole-heartedly agreed with the student who said that 'teachers have a passion for their subject'. This enthusiasm clearly inspires students.

The extensive range of extra-curricular activities complements the growing academic curriculum. Sixth formers are very much involved in the main school. The roles they have, including the experience of applying for these, enhances students' personal development. Students receive excellent support during their time in the sixth form through their form tutors but also from the management team. Although there is plenty of advice about application to university, the school has recognised the need to provide more support for students and parents from backgrounds where there may be limited experience of higher education. The management of the sixth form is very effective. Staff and students rightly praise the head of the sixth form for her leadership and management. There is an outstanding capacity to improve.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop middle leaders so all are as good as the best.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate.	School Overall	16–19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage		
The effectiveness of boarding provision		
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

All white boxes must be completed. The grey boxes are used wherever the inspection team has sufficient evidence to come to a secure judgement.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	



17 April 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of King Edward VI, Handsworth, Birmingham B21 9AR

Thank you for the important contribution you made when we inspected your school recently. I would particularly like to thank those students we interviewed for their extremely helpful insights.

You will probably not be that surprised to know that we found your school to be outstanding. We knew your school had a reputation for excellence but we were delighted to find that everyone is continuing to strive to make the school even better. Your teachers are constantly finding ways to improve your learning and help ensure you have high-level personal qualities. An important reason for this is the highly effective leadership of your headteacher and other senior managers. They are relentless in the pursuit of further improvement. As a result, teaching is outstanding and you have a comprehensive range of experiences that increases your enjoyment of school. This contributes to the very good examination results and ensures you develop into learners able to take full advantage of the opportunities available to you when you leave school. A key factor in all of this is the excellent relationships you have with your teachers. The school listens and responds to your views well. Students and staff are highly committed and are understandably very proud of the school.

The agreed area of improvement is to ensure that all middle leaders should develop to be as good as the best. You can help improve the school further by taking advantage of the additional opportunities the school is planning to consider student views even more.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector