



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

EDUCATIONAL QUALITY INSPECTION

KING EDWARD'S SCHOOL, BIRMINGHAM

MAY 2017



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SCHOOL'S DETAILS

School	King Edward's School, Birmingham		
DfE Number	330/6076		
Registered charity number	529051		
Address	King Edward's School Edgbaston Park Road Birmingham West Midlands B15 2UA		
Telephone number	0121 472 1672		
Email address	office@kes.org.uk		
Chief Master	Dr Mark Fenton		
Chair of governors	Mr Tim Clarke		
Age range	11 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	848		
	Boys	848	
	Seniors	639	Sixth Form 209
Inspection dates	4 to 5 May 2017		

PREFACE

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards following their inspection may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any unmet standards identified at their previous inspection.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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

This is an EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection, reporting on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

All inspections of independent schools in England are conducted according to the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Stephen Cole	Reporting inspector
Mr Mark Hoskins	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Emma Margrett	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Claire Osborn	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About the school

- 1.1 King Edward's School is an independent day school for boys aged between 11 and 18 years, founded in 1552 by King Edward VI. In the late nineteenth century, six other schools were opened within the single Foundation of the Schools of King Edward VI in Birmingham, comprising King Edward VI High School for Girls and five King Edward grammar schools. A non-selective sponsored academy was opened in 2010. The Foundation Board provides governors for all the schools, while the Independent Schools Governing Body - one of the Foundation's sub-committees - is the governing body for both independent schools, and holds proprietorial responsibility.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection in May 2011, a new Chief Master has been appointed. In addition, all pupils now study the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma and the school has widened accessibility to less affluent families significantly. A performing arts centre was opened in April 2012, and a wing providing new and refurbished science laboratories, a new Modern Languages Department and a new Upper School Common Room were opened in September 2013.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.3 The school's aim is to make available to the widest possible range of able boys an educational experience that is the richest, most diverse, and most exciting possible in an atmosphere that provides support, encouragement and care for everyone, and to prepare pupils for all that life has to offer.

About the pupils

- 1.4 Pupils come from an exceptionally wide range of backgrounds from all over Birmingham and the West Midlands, with over 70% of pupils from non-white British families. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is well above average. The number of pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is 41. None of these pupils has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. They require support for a range of minor learning difficulties, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia. One pupil has English as an additional language (EAL), for which he receives support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

<i>School name</i>	<i>National Curriculum name</i>
Shells	Year 7
Removes	Year 8
Upper Middles	Year 9
Fourths	Year 10
Fifths	Year 11
Divisions	Year 12
Sixths	Year 13

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils' examination results at both IGCSE and IB are consistently exceptional.
- Pupils' outstanding learning attitudes are underpinned by a natural collaboration and trust between pupils that accelerate their academic progress.
- Pupils achieve outstanding individual or team success in a wide spectrum of intellectual, cultural and physical activities.
- Pupils develop exceptional communication and numerical skills as they progress through the school.

2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils regard the school's diversity as an opportunity to develop their own understanding of other faiths and cultures. Without exception, relationships are harmonious and respectful.
- Pupils have a sophisticated understanding of moral values, but are unafraid to challenge others' ideas.
- They welcome and benefit greatly from the opportunities provided to debate issues, including those concerning mental health, sexuality and gender preference.
- In line with the school's values, pupils commit themselves enthusiastically to voluntary work in the Birmingham community and beyond.
- During their time at the school, pupils develop exceptional self-confidence and self-knowledge.

Recommendation

2.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- In the context of its excellent outcomes, the school should further extend pupils' application of ICT as part of its continuing efforts to broaden approaches to teaching and learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils have exceptional skills in all areas of learning. They communicate using vocabulary that is advanced for their years, and they thrive in debates. Many commented that their knowledge and understanding is enhanced by the opportunities to listen to the myriad opinions of both other pupils and visiting speakers. In all curriculum areas, their knowledge and understanding is underpinned by the scholarship of the teaching.
- 3.3 Pupils' development of knowledge, skills and understanding in the areas of human, aesthetic and creative knowledge are strong. They assimilate a broad knowledge base of philosophical theories, literature and art to support their answers and choices, which are consequently well considered and often sophisticated. Pupils draw on their reading from outside subject specifications, and in drama, their attendance at theatrical productions that the school has encouraged. Pupils have a high level of oracy and a strong command of both spoken English and foreign languages, here benefiting from the number of native speakers used by the school. Pupils articulate difficult ideas clearly using precise vocabulary, often because they listen carefully to the equally precise vocabulary used in teaching.
- 3.4 Pupils have an excellent grasp of mathematics. For example, IB pupils quickly mastered challenging work on variance and expectation, and an extended essay used advanced spherical geometry to investigate map projections. They have confident practical skills, encouraged by the school's experiential approach to teaching science. For example, a senior group had explored comprehensively why plant life cannot thrive inside a balloon. Pupils have a detailed knowledge of modern science. A younger pupil remarked "If you're interested in quantum mechanics here, then your age doesn't matter".
- 3.5 Speaking skills are highly developed for their age. Pupils communicate articulately and readily in lessons and in the many opportunities the school provides for debate of contemporary issues. The development of communication skills is embedded in the ethos of the school. Pupils participate actively in lessons, exploring increasingly complex ideas through conversation, challenging their own understanding and that of their peers. Pupils respond reflectively to verbal feedback and, in class, spontaneously ask and answer questions that provoke deeper thinking. They listen attentively to other pupils, and discussions and debates are both challenging and reflective.
- 3.6 Pupils' writing skills are highly developed and sophisticated for their age. They have a secure grasp of grammar and form in writing and can apply their skills across the curriculum. Pupils' prose and poetry, published in the annual anthology, display a sensitive and powerful literary creativity. They create some outstanding 2-D and 3-D artwork. The high quality of performance in music and drama has been enhanced by the investment in a performing arts centre, which includes a concert hall, a drama studio and rehearsal spaces. Several groups performed a selection of deliberately controversial plays that covered themes such as transgender, behaviour in times of rioting and the problems created by the digital age. A recent lower school play was co-written and co-directed by pupils. The school's music, which is performed jointly with the Foundation's sister school, is exceptional in terms of both participation and quality. Many pupils reported that their musical skills had developed rapidly since joining the school and others that their appreciation of classical music had been ignited. Each year the school produces six major concerts and many recitals, at which a third of the pupils perform. In recent years, pupils have won places in the National Youth Orchestra and the National Children's Orchestra.
- 3.7 Pupils of all abilities maintain an excellent level of achievement in public examinations. The following analysis uses data for the years 2012 to 2015, which are the most recent years for

which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been far above the national average for maintained schools, and well above the national average for maintained selective schools. Results at IGCSE have been higher than worldwide norms. In 2016, the high level of attainment was maintained. Results in IB examinations during the same period have been higher than worldwide norms. In 2016, five pupils at the school, out of 146 worldwide, achieved maximum points, and over half the pupils gained the equivalent of four A* grades at A-level. Almost all leavers proceed to universities in the UK with demanding entry requirements. The results confirm the excellent progress over time, which is in line with pupils of similarly high ability.

- 3.8 The most able, in a pupil cohort whose ability is well above the national average, work at a level beyond the expectations of public examinations. Those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make progress at least in line with other pupils. Pupils develop their skills, knowledge and understanding at a fast pace. However, they are confident about whom to turn to for support, and are happy to ask for it, should it be needed. Almost all pupil and parent responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires agreed that the school enabled progress. Pupils reported that they had made significant strides in their knowledge and understanding in their first year, using the examples of binary multiplication in mathematics and full conversations rather than odd phrases in French.
- 3.9 Other achievements by pupils, across a broad range of activities, mirror the success in public examinations. The senior mathematics team has won the national mathematics competition for two successive years. Pupils were national runners up in a general knowledge competition, and national quarter-finalists in chess. Pupils regularly win gold medals in mathematics and science competitions. They win awards at Model United Nations conferences and are regular finalists in a national public speaking competition. There is a strong record of success in winning competitive engineering scholarships. School teams are county or regional champions at a range of sports, and national finalists at water polo. A significant number of pupils achieve gold in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 3.10 Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to create presentations, or in design. They build websites with confidence, and use software to develop ICT applications (apps). However, they do not readily turn, or are systematically directed, to use ICT for research in lessons.
- 3.11 Pupils possess sophisticated study skills, and analyse, hypothesise and synthesise across a wide range of subjects. This is most evident, but not solely, in the extended essays at IB. Pupils are diligent learners who are keen to develop their understanding through wider reading and research. One pupil described how his reading outside class had encouraged him to develop his essay from being solely about humankind in relation to Alzheimer's to consider whether animals also have rights. Almost all pupils analyse concepts and hypothesise and develop complex ideas with ease. They process information quickly, and are allowed by teachers to develop their own approaches and formulate solutions. Teaching cements techniques but rarely dictates their application. Pupils remarked that "teachers never give the answers, just lead us to them". In lessons, pupils regularly take unprompted notes, and respond enthusiastically to teaching that invites them to challenge their own or others' ideas.
- 3.12 Throughout the school, pupils' very positive attitudes to learning contribute to the rapid progress they make in lessons and over longer periods. They have strong powers of concentration, and very seldom are deviated from the purpose of a lesson. As a result, the pace of learning is rapid. They produce a high volume of well-organised written work. There is little dictated by the teacher, and handouts are rare. Pupils are keen to learn from mistakes. Their progress is embedded in the strength of dialogue between pupils and teachers, and between the pupils themselves. Oral feedback from teachers is frequent, honest and direct, and any

written comments in books are thorough and detailed and further accelerate pupils' progress. Pupils respond positively to choices given. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils selected revision topics based on an informed awareness of their own weaknesses. Pupils are curious and involved. They challenge themselves, and without exception, they seek to collaborate. During class discussions, pupils relate to the arguments of the previous speaker rather than make isolated points. In classwork, encouraged by teachers, pupils will invariably check and correct others' solutions, and provide help. Pupils reported that they enjoyed an ethos in which they worked together rather than in competition, and hence felt more confident in vocalising their ideas in class.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are reflective but open to the ideas and approaches of others. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost all parents agreed that the school promotes an environment which successfully supports their child's personal development. Pupils arrive at the school with varied experiences from junior schools. They admit to feeling daunted by the new environment. In a short time, they settle into the cohesive community, in which all genuinely care for each other. They develop their self-confidence and resilience because of the frequent opportunities that they have to discuss major issues with teachers and fellow pupils. In lessons and discussions, pupils learn from a culture in which wrong answers are not derided but seen as an opportunity to learn. Younger pupils can request to be mentored by older pupils to help with organisation, study skills and concepts that they have found challenging. In discussion, pupils reported the scheme very effectively boosts self-esteem. Pupils can find the space to reflect calmly on their own progress in the light of the clear feedback from their teachers. By the time they leave the school, pupils have gained a strong awareness of their individual strengths, an understated confidence and an inspiring humility.
- 4.3 Pupils are confident in their decision-making, both academically and in the wider context of life choices. The positive physical and mental well-being of pupils reflect the sensible lifestyle choices that they make. Many stated that their most significant decision was to apply for King Edward's School in the first place. Pupils appreciate how the school has helped them to develop strong study habits and the ability to research and work independently. They recognise that they have developed the capacity to manage significant schedules and commitments and identify this as a crucial skill for their future careers. In lessons, pupils are regularly allowed to determine the direction of their learning, uncluttered by teachers' planning that routinely allows flexibility and a choice of tasks of varying challenge. Pupils embrace with invigorating enthusiasm the many clubs and societies that help them to broaden their intellectual and cultural experience, and in music, sport, drama and outdoor pursuits. Pupils gain a strong base of knowledge from the structured careers programme and can make informed decisions about subject choices at GCSE and IB. Pupils research and apply for their own work experience placements. They write reflective reports afterwards about how the experience has helped to inform their decisions about careers. Many pupils cited the Friday afternoon programme as a time when they developed their self-confidence: lessons are suspended so that pupils try a range of activities from sports coaching to outdoor cooking, a new language or joining the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) to enrich their education.
- 4.4 Pupils are very aware of the non-material aspects of existence. The school's ethos is successful in engendering a respect for all religions, and providing opportunities for all to practise their faith. Senior boys lead Muslim prayers, set examples and shape attitudes beyond worship. They demonstrate spiritual understanding by leading assemblies, attending thriving groups such as the Islamic Society and Christian Union and debating topical and philosophical themes in the pupil-led Agora Society or Open Platform. Pupils reported that they had further developed their self-knowledge through the school's mindfulness initiative. Through engagement with the history of the school and the current exhibition of the First World War period, pupils develop a strong understanding of the values and sacrifices of others. Within lessons, teachers provide the opportunity to reflect. For example, in a French lesson, the stimulus of a contemporary song was used to lead to a discussion on immigration in the target language, and in an English lesson, pupils considered impressively the place of nature in a Maori poem and reflected on its spiritual significance to that culture. The spiritual consciousness of pupils comes through forcefully in the pupils' anthology of verse, in for

- example the poems *False True Love* and *Family Remembered*, and in tasks that accompany the Extended Essay and Community, Activity and Service (CAS) sections of the IB Diploma. The school is a strongly fulfilled and content spiritual community.
- 4.5 Pupils routinely conduct themselves in a calm and purposeful way around the school. In lessons, behaviour is impeccable. Pupils switch easily from the positive clamour of collaborative work to complete silence if a teacher or another pupil is addressing the class. The school administrators and senior prefects set a strong example as they support the smooth running of the school. Pupils have a very strong view of right and wrong, but the extremes are not unquestioned. Their approach to moral issues is based on thinking and free debate rather than acquiescence, as shown in a lesson based on the Ten Commandments. Sophisticated approaches to moral conundrums were seen in philosophy and religious studies lessons. In performances by the Middle School Drama Club, in collaboration with the girls' school, pupils presented themes such as self-identity, the impact of rioting on society and the pressures on young people in the modern digital age. In discussion, pupils stressed that they are ready to admit to any misdemeanour. Excellent relationships, based on mutual trust and high expectations, exist between pupils and their teachers.
- 4.6 Pupils are highly effective at working with and for each other. Collaboration sees no barrier in ability, background or belief. As a result, pupils display an impressive level of social awareness. In lessons, collaboration is the default approach to learning, and trumps any competitive edge. Outside lessons, pupils work together towards common goals. As a result, pupils develop into sociable, friendly individuals who have positive relationships with each other and staff. In the questionnaires, the vast majority of parents agreed that the school was well led and governed. The school's governors and leadership have energetically drawn together a significant fund to supply assisted places so that they can fulfil their aim of educating able pupils regardless of the financial circumstances of their families. As a result, pupils benefit socially from the broad social and ethnic mix.
- 4.7 Pupils report that they feel privileged to attend the school, appreciating its rich intellectual heritage in the city's and the nation's history. They embrace with generosity and humility its inclusive and outward-looking culture. Pupils consistently raise significant amounts and engage with a wide range of charitable activities, such as the long-running project of sponsoring cots at a local children's hospital. Pupils develop resilient attitudes through the award-winning outreach programme, delivering workshops, masterclasses in areas such as astronomy and forensic science and concerts for primary schools across the city. Many underpin their already highly-developed worldview through numerous school trips and the school's links in Mumbai. Pupils fill the space the school allows to experiment with their own initiatives. The leadership programme for younger pupils and the activities of the house system are successfully led by older pupils, further cementing an approach to life that is confident but never strays into arrogance.
- 4.8 Pupils flourish and are proud of the diversity of their economic, religious or cultural backgrounds. The school represents a community that is totally at ease with itself without any hint of tension. The sense of harmony extends beyond tolerance into a crusading acceptance and valuing of the individual. Almost all pupils and parents, in the questionnaire, say that the school encourages and promotes respect for other people and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Senior Muslim pupils are very proactive in helping younger ones to understand how their and the school's cultural traditions can naturally mesh. Pupils commented that they looked beyond the differences in background to a shared future. The pupil-led *Be Free* campaign is designed to promote positive mental health by free expression of individual values and personality, and its *modus vivendi* is echoed in lessons. For example, in drama, pupils were unpicking issues of sexuality and gender transitioning.

Pupils stated that mental health issues were openly and frequently discussed, and those with embryonic concerns are well supported by the leadership's appointment of mental health professionals.

- 4.9** Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead a healthy and safe lifestyle. Pupils report that they enjoy the wide variety of sporting activities that are provided by physical education and games lessons. They understand the significance of a careful choice of nutrition, as reflected in cooking prior to an outdoor camp. The variety of experiences in the Friday afternoon programme helps the pupils to develop interests and become well-rounded young men. The comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme promotes awareness of a balanced, healthy lifestyle, including a valued component on safety online and the risks of cyber-bullying.