

King Edward VI Five Ways School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103552
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	323858
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Philippa Francis HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1143
Sixth form	362
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jan De Jarratt
Headteacher	David Wheeldon
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Scotland Lane Bartley Green Birmingham B32 4BT
Telephone number	0121 475 3535
Fax number	0121 477 8555

Age group	11–18
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

King Edward VI Five Ways School is of medium size with a large sixth form. It holds specialist status in humanities and science. The attainment of students on entry is well above average. Boys outnumber girls. Very few students are eligible for free school meals. A higher than average percentage of students are from minority ethnic groups, as is the case for students for whom English is not their first language. The percentage of students who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very small. Very few students join the school at points other than Year 7, although between 50 and 70 students join the sixth form from local schools. The level of deprivation in the school's catchment area varies but overall is similar to the national average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

King Edward VI Five Ways is an outstanding school where students thrive. It celebrates its rich heritage alongside a clear focus on ensuring high levels of achievement and supporting its students to develop the skills and confidence to take their place as adults in the 21st century. Curriculum development is highly responsive to the needs of the school's high attaining students. Students gain exceptionally high results in examinations and make outstanding progress during their time at the school. Attendance is excellent across the school. The sixth form is outstanding.

Teachers provide a highly productive learning environment. Lessons are good, and many include outstanding features. Aspirations of teachers and students are high and the use of challenging targets alongside very effective support ensures these are almost always met. Assessment is accurate and supports high attainment in external examinations. Its ongoing use in lessons varies in quality; much is effective, but not all meets the quality of the best practice. The interesting and flexible curriculum is outstanding, as is the breadth of and participation in extra-curricular activities. Students' well-being is given high priority, and provision to support their adoption of the 'Every Child Matters' themes is having a highly beneficial impact. Proactive promotion of equality of opportunity and community cohesion takes place, with many innovative initiatives underway and very strong international links.

Leadership by the headteacher and experienced and capable senior managers is outstanding. Managers across the school are highly effective. Governors are skilled in their role as critical friends as well as being strong and effective supporters of the school. Self-evaluation is thorough and action plans arising from this process focus sharply on bringing about improvement. The school has a good record of making improvement and has outstanding capacity to improve further. Through highly effective deployment of resources combined with exceptionally high achievement, it provides outstanding value for money.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Almost all students progress to the sixth form, along with a smaller number of students who enter from other schools in the city. Their achievement is outstanding and the results they gain in external examinations are exceptionally high. Students develop very good interpersonal skills, are highly articulate and become rounded individuals making many valuable contributions to whole-school and community life. The breadth of extra-curricular activities in which they participate fully, along with the very good relationships they develop with teachers and each other as well as the extent to which they take on responsibility, are all contributory factors to this impressive development. Students are well aware of the importance of healthy and safe lifestyles. All complete their courses and attendance is excellent. Teaching and learning are good. Rigorous monitoring of progress and the use of challenging targets receive high priority and work very well to support students to improve levels of achievement further. Excellent facilities, including considerably improved information and communication technology (ICT) resources, enhance opportunities for independent learning, which is becoming a much more established feature of sixth form study. Managers have been instrumental in bringing about a number of changes, which have had a highly positive impact on provision. Almost all students are successful in progressing to their first choice universities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers make full use of highly effective learning strategies to improve good lessons to become outstanding.
- Apply high quality ongoing assessment consistently across all subjects.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students join the school with well above average prior attainment. They consistently attain exceptionally high standards and thrive during their time at school. Examination results improved further in 2008. All students gained five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics, and nearly three quarters of all results were at either A* or A grade. Attainment in the school's specialist subjects of sciences and humanities is exceptionally high. More than three quarters of results in these subjects were at the highest grades. Results at Key Stage 3 and for GCE A and AS levels are consistently very high and improving.

Students make outstanding progress at all levels in the school. The higher than average number of students from minority ethnic groups and those for whom English is not their first language make equally impressive progress. Students meet the challenging targets set for them partly because they are highly motivated and almost all work extremely diligently but also because they receive excellent academic guidance and support from their teachers. Students absorb knowledge at a rapid rate and learn to think for themselves quickly and effectively. They gain a wide range of skills over and above those directly linked to examination subject study. Many develop high levels of creativity through music, performance or art. Others show sporting prowess. Students have very good communication skills.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The students' outstanding behaviour and positive attitudes to learning are the result of the teachers' high expectations and excellent management skills. They show high awareness of the need for a healthy and safe lifestyle. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is outstanding. Students' cultural understanding is enhanced through both local and international links and visits. Students enjoy what the school has to offer and almost all eagerly participate in the many and varied extra-curricular activities that are available. Large numbers of students are active members of sports clubs, musical groups, and drama events, all of which have themes which reflect the school's ethnic diversity. The school council has a high profile and undertakes its responsibilities seriously, with subcommittees involved in a range of matters including catering, school transport and a teaching and learning group. Its input is valued by the school's leadership. Sixth form students are supportive of the school's caring ethos, for example through running societies for younger students. They also act as prefects, thereby supporting daily management and supervision activities. Business enterprise skills are integrated into many of the school's activities, which supports students in preparing for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. The majority of lessons are good and an increasing number include outstanding features. Progress made in lessons is at least good and, combined with outstanding academic support, ensures outstanding achievement. Sharing of good practice has been extended and is starting to bear fruit; however, outstanding features are not yet consistently widespread in enough lessons. Examples of outstanding practice include a Year 8 mathematics lesson based on probability where students engaged in an active starter, using handshaking to introduce the concept. This built on their earlier work and led to a fast pace within the lesson. In less effective lessons, teachers do not consistently use a wide range of effective strategies to develop learning. There remains a tendency for a few lessons to be too teacher-centred. Teachers have good subject knowledge which contributes to their effective teaching and this, combined with strong relationships with students, provides a positive learning atmosphere. Lessons are well planned with clear learning intentions and successfully use starter activities and useful summaries. Questioning techniques which consolidate and extend learning are used skillfully in testing and probing students' learning. Students have targets based on a range of information and data and, in the majority of lessons, these are used effectively and students are clear about how they can improve their work and make further progress. Final assessments are consistently good but ongoing assessment in lessons is not consistently of high quality. The effectiveness of marking varies: much is often constructive, but a small proportion does not give students clear guidance on how to improve their work. Students have opportunities to work independently, but mainly on activities initially directed by the teacher.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

All students follow an interesting and stimulating curriculum that meets their academic needs very well and conforms to statutory requirements. Creativity and flexibility at each key stage enables a range of accelerated programmes to be provided in appropriate subject areas. This approach helps to maintain students' interest and provides the challenge they need. It is further enhanced by the introduction of a condensed Key Stage 3 curriculum for Year 7. Provision for citizenship and personal, social and health education, careers advice and work experience is comprehensive and of high quality. The school's specialist humanities college status is impacting very positively on the curriculum. A second specialism of science is relatively new but is already being used productively. Specialist status has improved links with local schools, the community, business and higher education. The extra-curricular provision is rich and varied.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Parents, carers and students value the caring ethos that the school embodies and celebrate its intellectual rigour. Outstanding care, guidance and support help students to achieve extremely well and ensure they are safe. Students whose first language is not English, and those with learning difficulties and /or disabilities, are well supported and make progress in line with other students. Staff have very good systems for monitoring the progress of all students, and the setting of challenging individual targets for each subject. Students know what they need

to do to achieve these and that they will get the help that they need to do so. Targets are shared with families and monitored regularly in 'learning conversations' between students and tutors. Students at risk of underachievement are identified quickly and prompt action is taken to support them. Secure systems exist for the safeguarding of students and their health and safety. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out and the school provides a healthy and safe working environment. There are effective partnerships with other local agencies to ensure that students, including those at risk, receive the support they need.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

A clear vision exists that highlights the inclusive nature in which the school educates its students in a friendly, caring and stimulating community. The headteacher and his senior team set a clear direction that focuses strongly on improvement and thorough self-evaluation. An open process of discussion at all levels across the school ensures that development planning emanates from all sections, and makes sure that all aspects are integrated.

The revised leadership structure encourages greater involvement among staff in leadership roles and more opportunities for promotion and taking on further responsibilities. It supports the rigorous cycle of monitoring and review, especially ensuring that departmental reviews are effective in developing future practice. Results are analysed thoroughly to inform learning and teaching. Coupled with formal lesson observations, this ensures that improving classroom practice receives high priority. There are high expectations of students and challenging targets are set to raise standards. These are not simply academic but focus on a pupil's whole approach to learning. As one parent put it, 'the school emphasises the need to develop a balanced individual'.

A strong emphasis on equality of opportunity ensures that all students realise their full potential. Assemblies, extra-curricular activities and working in the wider community successfully reflect the backgrounds, aspirations and interests of all students. From this arises a strong feeling of community cohesion, in which students do not simply take on opportunities offered to them but actively contribute to the community's well-being. The large number of links with other organisations also illustrates this, along with the effective use of specialist funding allocated for community activities. None of this could happen without the support and guidance of a strong and active governing body. Governors discharge their responsibilities admirably and are fully involved in the working of the school.

Resources and accommodation are excellent. Significant expansion of ICT resources has taken place. Impressive new centres for sixth form study, specialist status provision and to house a large range of fitness equipment are part of the well cared for campus. Deployment of all resources, not least the highly qualified and strongly motivated staff, is effective in achieving outstanding value for money.

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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 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/or disabilities make progress	1	

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
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

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	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

28 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of King Edward VI Five Ways School, Birmingham B32 4BT

Thank you for your contribution to the inspection of your school. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your views, which you expressed clearly and constructively. This was very helpful in informing our work.

Your school is outstanding in its overall effectiveness. Not only does the school ensure exceptionally high levels of achievement, it also supports you in making outstanding personal and social development. The school's interesting and flexible curriculum is well tailored to your needs. The range of skills and the level of confidence you gain from an excellent level of participation in both extra-curricular activities as well as in a wide range of meaningful school and community projects are impressive. You work very hard and the care, support and guidance provided for you by teachers and other staff are exemplary. Teachers provide a high level of challenge through target setting and monitor your progress very thoroughly. They teach good lessons and many lessons include outstanding features. To ensure that more lessons become outstanding, we have asked that teachers make widespread use of the highly effective strategies that are evident in the very best lessons and that ongoing assessment in lessons is more consistently of the very highest quality.

Leadership and management of your school are outstanding. The headteacher, managers at all levels and teachers set high standards in all respects across the school. The school not only maintains consistently high standards but also has a very good record of bringing about improvement. Its self-evaluation process is thorough and used well to identify where improvement is needed. Governors are highly effective in their role and know the school well. The school's resources are excellent and well used.

The atmosphere within school is busy and productive as well as harmonious. It is highly creditable that you all work so well together and help each other. The school's exemplary work to promote community cohesion and equality of opportunity supports this very effectively. The work of the school council in influencing school life and development is impressive.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Francis

Her Majesty's Inspector