

Serco Inspections  
Cedar House  
21 William Street  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 1LH

**Ofsted**  
T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Serco**  
**Direct T** 0121 683 3888

7 October 2011

Mr J Allen  
King Edward VI Sheldon Heath Academy  
Sheldon Heath Road  
Sheldon  
Birmingham  
B26 2RZ

Dear Mr Allen

## **Academies initiative: monitoring inspection of King Edward VI Sheldon Heath Academy**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit, with my colleagues Clive Kempton HMI and Simon Rowe, additional inspector, to your academy on 5 and 6 October 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection in connection with the academies initiative.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with, the Principal, senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders, groups of students and the Chair of the Governing Body.

### **Context**

The King Edward VI Sheldon Heath Academy predecessor school, Sheldon Heath Community Arts College, was an 11–18 secondary school. The academy has retained the performing arts specialism and added science to its specialisms. The academy opened in September 2010 with the support of its sponsor The King Edward VI Foundation. The majority of staff transferred from the predecessor school and there have been significant changes to the leadership of the academy at all levels. The academy has a house system. The academy had no new accommodation, but building work is due to start in the very near future.

The academy is larger than average. There are currently 1183 students on roll, including 185 in the sixth form. Students' attainment on entry is below the national average; the proportion of students who are known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average as is the proportion of students from ethnic minority groups. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average. The proportion of students who have a special education need and/or disability is broadly average.

### **Students' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning**

The academy has successfully raised attainment levels above those of its predecessor school. In GCSE examinations in 2010, 80% of Year 11 students in the predecessor school gained at least five A\* to C grades. In 2011, 98% of the students matched this benchmark, with the proportion who gain at least five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics rising from 47% to 53%. Attainment has risen across a wide range of subjects, including science and modern foreign languages. In 2011 the academy successfully entered students for the three separate science GCSEs and has increased the number studying for these this year. The increased success at GCSE has also meant more students are staying on to study in the sixth form. Consequently, the academy is able to offer a greater variety of courses and more A level options. The full impact of these increases has yet to be seen because the cohort of students has yet to complete these courses. Results in 2011 were better than those in 2010 and tracking information shows students are being increasingly successful. The academy has supported students well and increasing numbers are progressing to study at university.

The strong emphasis on raising the proportion of students who achieve a grade C or better has brought about significant improvements in many subjects. However, the proportion of students who gain grades A or A\* is below average, often because students who are capable of reaching these grades have not been sufficiently challenged in lessons or work is not planned to stretch the most able.

In 2011 results for mathematics and English show that students who left primary school with below average attainment made good progress. The academy's tracking information shows that, across all years, students make better progress since the start of the academy than they were making in the predecessor school. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities also make good progress.

### **Other relevant student outcomes**

A major success has been the way in which students feel part of the academy and are proud, particularly being part of the King Edward VI Foundation. Students show a positive attitude to learning, and behaviour around the academy and in lessons is generally good. The numbers of both temporary and fixed-term exclusions have

fallen so that now both are low. Attitudes to learning make a clear contribution to improved academic progress and good personal development.

Attendance has improved and is above average. Preparation for the next stage of students' education and for their futures is improving, with rising standards and improving personal development. The proportion of students who do not go onto education, employment or training aged 16 has fallen and is low. Students are proud of their contribution to the local community. Different groups get on well together and students work together harmoniously. They respect their differences and celebrate each other's achievements. Students were observed during the inspection showing great respect when they were being told about Black History Month during assembly. They enjoyed the praise they received for their efforts in raising money for the local children's hospital and for their efforts with food donations towards the forthcoming harvest festival. These are due to be donated to a local homeless support group and to local residents.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The academy has made significant changes to the curriculum so that students follow a wide variety of courses with more opportunities to complete GCSE examinations. Students often start GCSE courses in Year 9 and some then complete these at the end of Year 10 before progressing to additional courses in Year 11. Options in the sixth form have been greatly extended and now provide opportunities for students to study A level courses as well as a variety of Level 3 vocational courses. Many changes to the curriculum are still in the early days of implementation and have not had time to show their full impact on raising achievement.

The quality of learning is improving and is often good and sometimes outstanding. In the best lessons, teaching is well planned with learning activities which meet the needs of all students. Objectives are clearly linked to intended learning outcomes. Lessons have a good pace and a sense of urgency. For example in art, students made very good progress by working concertedly over a sustained period of time, and, in French, students were completing a number of short episodes that ensured they were fully engaged and motivated. Questioning is used well to assess students' progress and then adjust activities to extend learning to the next level. Students are also questioned to develop understanding. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject is evident so that students are well motivated and show an interest in what they are learning. When teaching is satisfactory, elements of these good features are missing.

Procedures for pastoral care are very clear and effective. Staff know their students well, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional mentoring and carefully tailored support ensures students whose circumstances make them more vulnerable succeed at the academy. Students commented that they like the all-age groups which meet each week. Very good support for individuals has meant that attendance has risen and incidents of poor behaviour significantly reduced.

## **The effectiveness of leaders and managers**

The strong leadership of the Principal, well supported by the senior team, has set a clear strategic direction that is understood and shared by all staff. Middle leaders feel empowered and are taking greater responsibility for improving the quality of teaching and learning within their subject areas. They are also held to account both by departmental reviews and also by the governing body. There is a strong commitment to ensuring individuals succeed. The academy has clear policies and procedures, including those for safeguarding students and for evaluating performance. Senior leaders have a secure evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and are giving effective support to try to ensure all teaching becomes at least good. Staff respond well to the frequent sessions after school to develop their teaching skills and these are often well led by the advanced skills teachers within the academy. More staff are also taking responsibility for demonstrating good practice at the voluntary weekly meetings before school on a Wednesday.

The specialist area of science is doing well, with more students proving successful across a range of options. The specialist physics facility provides good support for other local schools and opportunities for teachers' professional development. Performing arts also play a strong part within the academy. It was good to see the blues band play during assembly. The academy's self-evaluation is accurate and is used to identify priorities for improvement. The academy has also developed action plans in response to equalities issues, subject reviews and from the views of students. These plans identify appropriate areas to develop but the success criteria by which these are to be evaluated are not always linked to measurable outcomes.

Governance is strong and effective. The governing body is made up of governors from the sponsor as well as some from the predecessor school. The academy has demonstrated, through its sustained improvement that it has a good capacity to improve.

## **External support**

Staff and expertise from other schools within the King Edward VI Foundation have been the main source of additional support. The School Improvement Partner has worked closely with the academy and his support and challenge has been well received. School Improvement Partner reports have helped identify areas for development.

## **Main Judgements**

The academy has made good progress towards raising standards.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Raise achievement further, particularly for students whose attainment on entry is above average, by ensuring:
  - students' targets are challenging
  - work in lessons provides adequate challenge for students of all abilities.
  
- Build on the improvements to the quality of teaching and learning so that lessons are consistently at least good by ensuring:
  - lessons are delivered with good pace
  - objectives identify what students are expected to learn
  - questioning is used well to assess, how well students are learning, develop understanding and progress learning to the next stage
  - teachers share their enthusiasm and subject expertise to enthuse students to extend their learning.
  
- Ensure development and improvement plans include clear, measurable success criteria based upon outcomes so that the academy can evaluate its success.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Group at the Department for Education. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Michael Smith  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**