



King Edward VI Grammar School, Chelmsford

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115327
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290208
Inspection dates 6–7 November 2006
Reporting inspector Barbara Hilton

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)	School address	Broomfield Road
School category	Foundation		Chelmsford
Age range of pupils	11–18		Essex CM1 3SX
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	01245353510
Number on roll (school)	858	Fax number	01245344741
Number on roll (6th form)	298		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Ian Brown
		Headteacher	Dr M J Walker
Date of previous school inspection	5 November 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	6–7 November 2006	290208

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

King Edward VI Grammar School became a specialist science college in 2004, having gained leading edge status for exemplary practice in 2003, which was renewed in 2006. While it is a little smaller than most secondary schools, the sixth form is relatively large. Students are high attaining on entry in Year 7 with very few having learning difficulties or disabilities. Only boys are admitted at this stage and most stay for the whole of their secondary education. Boys and girls from other schools are accepted into the sixth form, in which girls comprise about one fifth. Many students come from advantaged backgrounds. Few are eligible for free school meals. An increasing number come from minority ethnic backgrounds, their proportion slightly exceeds that nationally, and all speak English fluently.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The school is outstandingly effective, confirming its own evaluation. It is a very effective learning community, which aims successfully to develop the whole person, has a strong collegiate ethos and is outward looking. Passionate interest in learning by teachers and students, creates a vibrant climate for interesting developments. Outstanding results are achieved, building on the very high abilities of students and staff and the commitment of all to improvement. The school is heavily oversubscribed.

Students achieve very highly. Results are outstandingly high at the end of Year 9, GCSE and in the sixth form. High proportions of students reach the highest possible grades across a wide range of subjects. Virtually all take at least 10 subjects at GCSE and stay on to take four (sometimes five) subjects at A2 level, in addition to general studies. Results are especially good in science and mathematics and students distinguish themselves in many areas including, for example, music.

Students' personal development and well-being are excellent. They develop mature approaches to learning supported by their excellent attitudes and behaviour. They have excellent basic skills which mean that they have the capacity to think for themselves and be creative. They are very well equipped for their future lives. Students say the school is 'great', they enjoy learning and think the teaching is very good.

The quality of education provided is excellent. Teaching and learning are outstanding. Teachers' very high expectations set the tone for students' own learning and achievements. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and enrich learning to help students to improve. King Edward's is a 'lead information and communication technology (ICT) in science school'. The learning resources on the website are excellent. The curriculum supports students' learning very well. Extra-curricular opportunities are richly varied and benefit from many local, regional and international links. Pastoral support and guidance are excellent and teachers intervene helpfully if students have difficulty. Targets for improvement are set jointly by students with their form tutors and students say these are helpful. However, a few students could do better at GCSE and teachers make relatively little use of target grades to accelerate their learning.

Leadership and management are outstanding in both setting the direction for improvement and drawing on the many strengths of staff. Governors are astute, businesslike and very effective in steering improvements. The school's status as a specialist science college has enhanced greatly provision for students' learning in science, mathematics, ICT and many other subjects. Partnership with other schools and businesses is very effective. The school is self-critical and evaluates its progress very thoughtfully. Improvement since the last inspection has been very strong. Very high standards have been maintained, results have continued to rise and the capacity to improve further is very good. Specialist science college targets are well exceeded in the main school and most are met in the sixth form. Value for money is very good.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The sixth form is outstandingly successful. Results are very high – the school's highest ever in 2006. These come from outstanding teaching. Teachers are highly knowledgeable and enthusiastic, so students are hungry to learn and make very rapid progress. The sixth form is extremely well led. Senior staff are very well informed, take a pride in their students and are highly committed to them.

Sixth formers' personal development is outstanding. They feel very well cared for, are very active in helping younger students and take a full part in the community. They speak very positively of the excellent careers guidance and the wide curriculum they enjoy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Refine the use of targets to help those students who could improve their grades at GCSE.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Results are very high. Achievement is very good at each stage of learning. Students develop very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and their practical skills are exceptional. Progress is particularly good up to Year 9 by which time students reach very high standards, especially in mathematics. At GCSE the proportion of the very highest grades (A*/A) achieved is notably high: over four-fifths in 2006 and in science and mathematics about two-thirds of the grades at GCSE were at A*; only in economics were no A* grades achieved. A few students 'coast' at Key Stage 4 and could do better at GCSE. Targets published by governors are suitably challenging for Year 11, and are exceeded. Results are on an upward trend. Students of all backgrounds, the few with learning difficulties and disabilities and girls in the sixth form achieve very highly.

The average performance of sixth formers in A2 level examinations is very high. These results are among the top of all state schools, having improved steadily in the past seven years. At A2 level in 2006 two-thirds of results were grade A and six out of seven grades were A or B. Results were especially good in chemistry, English literature, further mathematics and geography. Virtually all students progress on to university. In lessons standards and achievement are high. Students explore and apply knowledge keenly. Their progress is fostered by exemplary teaching.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students' personal development and well-being are outstandingly good. Attendance is well above average. Students have excellent attitudes to the school and are very keen to learn. In lessons, there is real enjoyment, with students keen to progress and relishing the process.

Because the school is excellent at giving students the stimulus they need, academically and socially, their emotional development is outstanding. Students get on very well with teachers and each other. Behaviour is excellent, around the school and in lessons. Only in a very few lessons does a little distracting chatting occur. Students are keen to live healthily. Nearly all make healthy choices at lunchtime and regular exercise is popular. They are very trustworthy and readily adopt safe practices.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Regular assemblies and religious education enrich awareness of many faiths. Respect is high for others, their feelings and beliefs. Students are self-disciplined and have excellent chances to take responsibility. Students of all backgrounds play a very full part in school life, for example, in the highly popular house system and production of the excellent Chelmsfordian magazine. They are proud of their many achievements, including in sports and music, the Combined Cadet Force and the Corps of Drums of the Essex Regiment. They have opportunities for management and leadership training and enterprise activities and are equipped very effectively for their future lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students are very appreciative of their teachers' deep and enthusiastically conveyed knowledge. Lessons are very well prepared and planned. Well directed questions broaden students' understanding. They are engaged in focused and stimulating discussion which helps their personal development well beyond the confines of the subject. Teachers' readiness to listen encourages students to express themselves openly. Students are encouraged to think for themselves and to carry out research, to the limit of their abilities. The great majority use their time very effectively when working both independently and in pairs, however, a few allow their attention to drift. There is some inconsistency in the use of homework and the timing of coursework. Marking of work is generally good and sometimes excellent, but in some cases there is a shortage of written comment on how work could be improved. Well focused extra support is available for those who need it.

A wide variety of teaching styles and resources is used very effectively to capture students' interest and maintain the pace of learning. Assessment arrangements are very effective. In many lessons older students use examiners' marking criteria to evaluate their work. This helps them to understand what is expected, and to reach it.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The curriculum very effectively matches students' aspirations and capabilities so they achieve very highly across a broad range of subjects. Statutory requirements are fully met. Provision for numeracy, ICT and literacy is good and students are well prepared on matters of health and safety.

Extra-curricular opportunities are outstanding and greatly benefit students' overall development. Many club, sports and cultural activities are arranged, and a huge range of visits enhances learning and broadens horizons. For example, groups of students have had work experience in Germany, an exchange visit from Japan, explored the geography of Iceland and outward bound activities in Wales. Links with universities and the world of work help students to prepare for their futures.

The school makes excellent use of initiatives, such as specialist science status, to enhance learning in mathematics and throughout the curriculum, and to work in partnership with others. Business links provide opportunities for students in Year 8 upwards to develop engineering skills. The wide variety of opportunities provides an excellent source of ideas that make the school's provision vibrant and outward-looking.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Pastoral arrangements are excellent. The vast majority of parents are very positive about the school and confirm that their children are well cared for, guided and supported. Arrangements for the protection and safety of students are properly in place. Bullying is rare and any incidents are dealt with promptly and efficiently. Students are well known individually so that if they have problems they are often identified and supported sympathetically.

All students have opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as form representatives and in the house structure. Older students have a wide range of opportunities to develop social skills and sixth formers mentor and tutor younger students. The careers programme is excellent and includes work experience and enterprise activities. Relevant individual careers support is provided with good advice on progression.

The school has developed its own systems for monitoring and guiding students' progress which are, in the main, very effective. These include clear criteria against which students' progress is monitored in subjects. Regularly, students discuss and set targets

with their tutors but because target grades would be so frequently at the ceiling of the grade systems, they are relatively little used. The school is planning to harmonise good practice across subjects in the main school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Leadership by the headteacher and senior team is outstanding. They successfully enable the school to be among the highest performing nationally by developing students' abilities and qualities to the full.

Planning is very effectively coordinated and harnesses contributions by all staff. Commitment to the continuous professional development of staff is strong and many teachers are distinguished in their fields. Involvement of teachers in research activities through leading edge initiatives supports them in developing their expertise and enhances students' learning. Initiatives, including specialist status in science, are led and managed excellently.

The school is self-critical in reviewing its progress and draws on parents' views. Some students feel their voice is little heard; the school has strengthened dialogue with them by involving them in the headteacher's self-evaluation group. Performance in examinations is monitored and evaluated very rigorously at senior level, but there is scope for improving understanding among subject leaders of how to use data in setting targets for improvement.

Equipment is very efficiently used, and excellent learning resources are available for students on the school's website. The buildings are well presented but very heavily used and in places are antiquated. Governors are very capable, forward-thinking and conscientiously discharge their duties. They are keen to enrich students' learning and to improve the capacity of the school to provide excellently. They have overseen the building of a new Music School, a Learning Development Centre, and renovation of the gym and are now steering plans to build a new sixth form centre. Financial management is skilful and resources are very well targeted.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

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 behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
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 the 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.

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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

8 November 2006

Dear Students

The School Council, King Edward VI Grammar School, Chelmsford, Broomfield Road, Chelmsford, Essex. CM1 3SX

Thank you for all your very positive contributions during our recent inspection of your school. We appreciated your welcome and the mature way in which you spoke with us. We believe that you would want to know what we thought about your school. We are glad to confirm your views that 'the school is great'. In fact, we found both the main school and the sixth form to be outstanding. We were particularly impressed with:

- Your achievements, which are very good at each stage of learning.
- Your personal development, which is outstanding.
- Teaching, which is outstanding and enables you to learn very effectively.
- The curriculum, which matches very well your aspirations and capabilities so that you achieve very highly across a broad range of subjects.
- Pastoral arrangements, which are excellent and help you to make the right choices for your future.
- Leadership and management, which are outstanding.

Even in outstanding schools there can be scope for improvement. We have asked the school to:

- Refine the use of targets, to help those of you who could improve your grades at GCSE to reach your full potential.

We greatly enjoyed our days in school, and know that you enjoy being there also. We wish you all every success.

Yours sincerely

Barbara Hilton Lead inspector