



King Edward VI High School

Inspection Report - Amended

Unique Reference Number 124445
Local Authority Staffordshire
Inspection number 292999
Inspection dates 25–26 September 2006
Reporting inspector David Biltcliffe

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Westway
School category	Community		Stafford
Age range of pupils	11–18		ST17 9YJ
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01785 258546
Number on roll (school)	944	Fax number	01785 224231
Number on roll (6th form)	137		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Clive Noak
		Headteacher	C Elstone
Date of previous school inspection	1 October 2001		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11–18	25–26 September 2006	292999

Amended Report Addendum

Report updated to resolve formatting inconsistency

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage. Pupils' academic attainment on entry to Year 7 is about average. Sixth formers are taught either on the school site or elsewhere within the Stafford Collegiate. The headteacher has been in post for three years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

King Edward VI is a good school, providing a fine standard of education for its pupils. During the last three years it has improved significantly, lifting its performance and the climate for learning from barely satisfactory, with a substantial financial deficit, to the good levels they have now reached. The rate of improvement accelerated in the last year to produce the best academic results in the school's history as a comprehensive school.

This improvement has come about as a result of clear policies set by governors and managers, wise, determined leadership and close monitoring of how well intentions work out in action. The school's managers recognise that further improvement is possible. The vast majority of pupils and parents think that the school is doing a good job. As one parent put it, 'This school has turned itself round'.

Academic standards are now broadly average. They also show clear evidence that higher standards are working their way up through the school. By the end of Year 9, standards are a little above average, represent good achievement and show a marked rise over earlier times. The 2006 GCSE results, too, were close to average and the best of recent years. They represent a good achievement for the majority of pupils, but some boys and higher-ability pupils can do still better. In the sixth form, standards are average and most students make sound progress.

Senior managers have an accurate view of where the school is going and what needs tackling. Central to their work is lifting further the quality of teaching and learning. They can already point to success in the form of recent test and examination results. Much teaching is good but, in a minority of lessons, the lack of pace, probing questions, thorough discussion, diagnostic marking or end-of-lesson reviews restricts what pupils achieve.

The school is a welcoming, safe and encouraging place. Relationships are warm, understanding and respectful. Attitudes and behaviour are good. A healthy lifestyle is given appropriate emphasis. Pupils feel that their voice is listened to. The vast majority enjoy school.

Leadership and management are good under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher. Strengths lie in the clear direction and encouraging support given by senior managers to other staff and to pupils and in the determined pursuit of high quality. Ways of monitoring and assessing performance require further sharpening, however, especially in the sixth form. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall and good in the last three years. All the indications are that this school is very well placed to achieve even higher standards in the future.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

These aspects of the sixth form are satisfactory. The academic standards reached by students and their pass rate in external examinations are broadly average. Grades obtained on vocational courses are generally high.

Students' achievement is satisfactory overall. In recent national examinations, for example, around two-fifths of students made good progress from GCSE and a further third satisfactory progress. About a quarter, however, did not make reasonable progress over their courses: some inadequate teaching and insufficient personal effort held some students back. In 2006, most students did well in English language, mathematics, physics, art, geography and business education, whilst a minority did not do as well as they should have done in English literature, biology and French. Fine teaching and hard work are the main reasons for students' successes.

The personal care and careers guidance offered to students are good. There is, however, little review of how well the sixth form performs academically. There are plans to overhaul current systems. Students take very good advantage of the extensive consortium arrangements. The range of cultural, extra-curricular and work-related activities provided enlarges students' experience well. The sixth form provides a pleasant environment in which to study and achieve independence, features much appreciated by the students themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement further by
- ensuring that all lessons have sufficient pace, searching questioning and adequate discussion and that they end with accurate assessments of progress made;
- making sure that all marking indicates clearly to pupils how they can improve their work; and
- evaluating the progress of students in the sixth form more systematically and in more depth and ensuring that any underachievement is addressed quickly and effectively.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 3

Standards are average and pupils' achievement is good. The school's academic work is improving fast. This improvement is the direct result of the management team's focused efforts on raising aspirations, addressing weaknesses in teaching and sharpening its systems for monitoring pupils' progress. It is also due to the staff's committed response to suitably demanding yet very supportive leadership.

By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Achievement is good, as illustrated by the much higher test results in 2006 than in previous years. Results were above

average in English, mathematics and science, comfortably exceeding the school's reasonable targets.

This improvement has not yet worked its way fully through to GCSE level, but Year 11 standards are now close to average and rising. Although not all the school's ambitious GCSE targets were reached and some underachievement remains amongst boys and higher-ability pupils, the most recent results were the school's best ever and reflected its success in cancelling out a dip in these pupils' earlier progress over Years 7 to 9. Sixth-form standards, as noted earlier, are average, representing a satisfactory achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Pupils' personal development is good across the school. Pupils rightly attribute much of this to the high level of support they receive from staff. Their enjoyment of school life is reflected in good attendance. Most follow healthy, sensible and safe lifestyles, although a small number of older pupils persist in smoking on site. The occasional bullying and the transition from primary school are managed very well, so that even the youngest pupils feel secure.

Good behaviour and attitudes contribute strongly to the solid academic progress that pupils make. Through the school council, pupils are fully involved in decision-making. For example, they are proud that bicycle sheds have been built because of their influence. They use the council constructively to air their views. They make a good contribution to the school community through the wide range of responsibilities they take on – such as supporting younger pupils through the 'buddying' scheme. They strongly foster 'global citizenship' through their close links with schools in Africa and Europe, thereby enhancing their good level of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. By the time they leave school, pupils have the academic and social skills to embark confidently on the next stage of their lives.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11, enabling pupils to make good progress. Well-targeted training continues to improve the quality of teaching. This training has not yet, however, been focused on the sixth form, where teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.

Teachers manage their classes effectively, successfully insisting that pupils behave well. As a result, pupils respect their teachers and learn in a calm and orderly

atmosphere. Lessons are well planned. Pupils understand what they will be doing and what is expected of them. The best teachers set tasks that are both challenging and enjoyable. They use praise well to encourage pupils to learn. Most teachers pose questions that extend pupils' understanding. Teaching is often lively and, along with the good relationships, stimulates pupils' interest, creating in them a desire to know more. In these lessons, pupils learn rapidly and willingly.

In a minority of lessons the pace of the lessons is too slow, so that pupils do not make sufficient progress. Not all teachers assess and mark work well enough to ensure that both they and their pupils know how pupils' work can be improved. Although most teachers use the last few minutes of lessons to sum up what has been covered, not all check precisely what pupils have learned. In a minority of lessons, including those in the sixth form, there is not enough rigorous, probing questioning or sufficient opportunity for pupils to discuss and debate.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good. The 'alternative' curriculum, partly college-based, for the lowest-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 meets their needs well. A satisfactory range of vocational courses is provided in school, in local colleges and by other providers. For a small number of its most able pupils the school offers three separate sciences at GCSE. This is, however, the only curricular provision specifically for these pupils and the school accepts that wider provision is required. In the sixth form, the collaboration with other schools provides a very extensive choice of GCE A-level and vocational courses. Currently, however, relatively few pupils take the vocational courses. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good opportunities to develop their understanding of the world of work through, for example, Enterprise Days and work experience. Young Enterprise activities enable students in the sixth form to sharpen their business skills. The lack of similar opportunities in Years 7 to 9 is a weakness. Pupils' personal and academic development is considerably enriched by a good range of clubs, sports, musical activities and residential trips.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Pupils accurately describe the level of care, support and guidance provided by the school as 'Good and getting better'. The school uses information supplied by external agencies intelligently to target resources where they are most needed. Arrangements for child protection and all other risk assessments are in place. Tutors know their pupils well and are vigilant in their care. Vulnerable pupils are well supported. Behaviour is managed well and pupils feel safe. They are rewarded in appropriate ways for working hard. Careers education and guidance prepare them well for the future.

Pupils' progress is carefully tracked in Years 7 to 11. Those who fall behind or experience difficulty receive thoughtful, effective help. Most pupils receive satisfactory guidance as to what they need to do to improve. More remains to be done to ensure that boys and higher-ability pupils are adequately challenged. In the sixth form, personal support is sound, but the tracking and analysis of students' achievement are inadequate. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are provided with effective support, so enabling them to achieve well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Leadership and management are good. The outstanding, inspirational leadership of the headteacher has transformed this school, significantly lifting staff morale, pupils' achievement and the school's ethos and reputation. The successful establishment of sensible behaviour and good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well and expect to work hard. Parents and pupils at all levels in the school attribute the school's increasing success directly to the school's leadership and management.

The headteacher is supported by a committed management team and a hard-working staff. Their prime focus is on raising achievement. The governing body acts well as a knowledgeable 'critical friend' to the school. Staff use data carefully to track individual pupils' progress and set targets for their achievement. The senior management have robust data systems to underpin their assessment of the school's performance. Their monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning has enabled them to pinpoint the necessary steps to improve progress in lessons.

Resources are well deployed and the school gives very good value for money. Cooperation with other institutions is good. The consortium arrangements for the sixth form are widely recognised as a model of good practice. Senior management's track record of success in the last three years indicates that the school has a good capacity for further improvement.

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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?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	3

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?	2	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
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

As you know, inspectors recently visited your school to check on its progress. We should like to thank you all very much for your welcome and for what you told us.

We think that King Edward's is a good school. We found many things that you and your parents can be proud of.

- Your school gives you a good education and is getting better all the time.
- The results of last year's GCSE examinations and Year 9 tests were the school's best ever.
- You are able to learn well in a calm and well-disciplined atmosphere.
- You show good attitudes, behave well and attend regularly.
- Staff work very hard to provide you with a worthwhile, safe life in school.
- You were absolutely right when you told us that the leadership of your school is outstanding.

There are also a few things that need to be better. Please do all you can to help your teachers to sort out these weaknesses.

- Some of you could reach higher standards.
- In some lessons, you are not expected to think hard enough, discuss your views or to review at the end what you have learned. Not all marking shows you how to improve.
- The progress of sixth formers is not checked thoroughly enough.

Overall, you attend a good school that is very much on the way up. Most of your parents are, rightly, impressed by what it does. We wish you well in your future studies.