



Future Readiness and Educational Innovation

5 September 2019 – the very first day of the new academic year and, around the country, schools were welcoming pupils back for the start of term after the long summer holiday.

The late Ken Robinson's 2006 TED talk, 'Do Schools Kill At King's High things felt very different. Founded in 1879 amidst the growing calls for the education of girls, King's High had been based in the centre of Warwick, on Smith Street, for over 140 years.

Following a bold decision from governors, the largest investment in girls' education in the country, and eighteen months of building work (which also unearthed an ancient Roman barn), a new school was built for the girls of King's High.

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Its new home was a large, leafy, 55-acre campus on the edge of the town, co-located alongside Warwick Preparatory School and Warwick School for boys.

Part of Warwick Schools Foundation, the award-winning new school was the magnificent setting for a new era in the history of King's High. With incredible new facilities, it combined the highest standards of single-sex education with all the benefits of co-education through close collaboration with Warwick School.

It was a far cry from the old school on Smith Street, with its traditional atmosphere, listed buildings, and limited opportunities for collaboration with the other Foundation schools.

Today, King's High is a modern, thriving, forward-thinking school for around 830 girls. The school roll has grown by 25 per cent since the old days on Smith Street and that's no surprise given recent developments.

"King's High has become a centre for forward-thinking educational innovation."

This year a new boarding house for sixth form girls was opened; the house system was recently reformed and six new houses established, each twinned with an equivalent house

at Warwick School. There has been heavy investment in the pastoral and wellbeing provision, as well as music, sport and drama.

In addition, the curriculum has been reimagined to prioritise creative thinking, curiosity and a range of core "future-ready skills". Working closely with like-minded schools across the UK, King's High has become a centre for forward-thinking educational innovation. The accolades are testament to this: in 2022 King's High was named Independent Senior School of the Year and in 2023 it won the inaugural ISA National Award for Future-Readiness.

Launched in the summer of 2021, the school's "Curriculum of the Future" project has been running for nearly four years. Every classroom and space across the site now proudly displays the King's High Learning Wheel, emphasising the school's core goal of preparing changemakers of the future. Students prize five key dispositions towards their learning: imagination, inquisitiveness, collaboration, independence and persistence.

Younger pupils across the key stages can now curate their various wider co-curricular activities through the King's High Changemaker Award, while older students take this a step further through the completion of the King's High Baccalaureate.

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Perhaps the most exciting innovation to come from the Curriculum of the Future Project has been the school's introduction of two "Future Ready" courses, designed by staff at King's High and offered to pupils in Key Stage 4 as a replacement to one or two of their GCSE choices.

The King's High Global Changemaker Programme offers units on social justice, global citizenship, climate change, and law and the legal system. The Innovation and Entrepreneurship Programme covers data analysis, sustainable engineering, neuroscience and entrepreneurship.

Now heading towards its third year of delivery, staff and pupils at the school speak passionately about the impact of these courses. This is a special source of pride given that the GCSE years all too often beat solely to the drum of terminal examinations.

Uptake on the courses has exceeded expectation, with 40 per cent of pupils opting for a Future Ready course in year one of delivery, and 70 per cent in year two. School leaders and the talented teachers running the courses put this popularity down at least in part to the strong emphasis on creative forms of assessment.

Year 10s and 11s nationally are well trained in exam technique, but the King's High Future Ready cohorts enter A-levels with experience of everything from giving TED-style talks to producing films, building sustainable machines and running a small business – all as part of their core curricular learning.

Concepts such as these are proven, of course, in what pupils say about their experience, and staff at the school have been delighted by the feedback they have received, with girls praising the focus on teamwork, real world problem-solving and the chance to be creative.

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King's High now contributes as a founding member of the School Directed Courses Consortium, a group of leading schools who meet regularly to share best practice when it comes to innovation during the Key Stage 4 years and beyond.

Through its bold innovation, King's High has added its voice to the national discussion about GCSEs, pointing out that the debate often takes on an unhelpfully binary tone, pitting knowledge against skills and vice versa.

King's High is collaborating with other schools and leading the way to a new vision for GCSEs with powerfully relevant, real-world assessment methods and course content. Named “a school of the future” by Tatler Magazine, they offer their students new, innovative pathways that represent a refreshing and exciting change from traditional GCSEs.