



King's High School

# MUDGY STILETTOS REVIEW

2025



# KING'S HIGH, WARWICK

*A top senior school for girls known for pioneering educational innovation and crowned Senior School of the Year in the ISA (Independent Schools Association) 2025.*

One of the UK's top independent girls' schools offering day, boarding and flexi-boarding and a creative, future-inspired curriculum for around 830 pupils in historic Warwick. It's not hard to see why King's High has a long waiting list of students from as far afield as Birmingham and Oxfordshire and grown 40% over the last five years.

Recognised by the ISI for its 'Significant Strength' for Changemaking, it's the only school locally to offer Engineering, along with alternative GCSE alternative courses exploring Sustainable Engineering, Data Analysis, Social Justice and Climate Change through relevant real-world assessment. And they've recently introduced a new Science for Change Programme, covering experimental science, conservation, sustainable synthesis and medical physics.

Kindness, curiosity, courage, and integrity are valued highly here.

Pupils and staff waved a fond farewell to characterful period property Landor House in 2019, after celebrating the school's 140th birthday, and moved into a beautiful new purpose-built, RIBA award-winning, Smart Building – and its seriously impressive.

King's High girls joined pupils from Warwick Prep, Warwick Junior and Warwick School on the main Myton Road campus. Their stunning airy and light-filled new home has been designed by London-based Nicholas Hare Architects with state-of-the-art facilities, including a mixed Sixth Form Centre – home to over 200 King's High students – shared with Warwick School boys.

This high-achieving all-girls school is known for its innovative programmes, compassion and artistic creativity – not one but two former pupils are successful film and TV actors. It also recognises the importance of embedding fun and a bit of friendly competition – at break-time there's table tennis, table football, Just Dance and a new 12-hole disk golf course to keep girls entertained.

Its record-breaking exam results for the last three years running are inspiring – but it's the 'value added' that tells the most powerful story. On average, pupils achieve close to a full grade higher in every subject than their baseline predictions in Year 7.

In recognition of its excellence King's High has just been announced as Senior School of the Year at the prestigious ISA (Independent Schools Association) Awards 2025. It is the second time the school has clinched this award in the last four years, achieving success in the same category in 2021.

It follows a string of recent accolades, including winning the ISA's inaugural award for Future Readiness and being named the Sunday Times top school in Warwickshire for academic performance. Head Master Dr Stephen Burley was also named Tatler's 2025 Best Head of a Public School.

The school, which is more like a mini-university campus, is made up of four very different, intimately linked buildings including The Spirit of King's, a 7.5m tall, polished steel abstract sculpture designed by British sculptor and public artist Liz Middleton. It was constructed near Lake Garda in Italy by a world-expert in the field, designed to represent the Spirit of King's or school motto, *Spiritus Reget*, and symbolises a student's journey through King's.

Each of the stunning four school buildings has its own individual style. Highlights include:

- **The main school building** has retained a Tardis-like effect similar to the old school premises in Smith Street. It may look contained from the outside but inside it's vast with a glorious school hall, a fabulous dining hall, a library, large airy classrooms, dance and drama studios and 10 science labs. They all centre around the impressive **Quad** which looks like a modern Oxford college – but without the stuffiness. Here there are no rules to stop the girls from walking on the grass!
- With its maple wood bookcases, curved orange bookshelves and beanbags in primary colours, **the library** is one of the funkiest modern reading spaces I've yet to come across.
- A light-filled **Art, Design/Technology and Food Tech block** includes teaching rooms, Great British Bake Off-style kitchen; a ceramics studio; print-making facilities, a photographic dark room, DT equipment and tools, and there's regular artists-in-residence.
- A state-of-the-art **Sports Centre** where facilities include a gym, locker room, changing rooms and a large fitness suite. King's High school also shares a multi-million music hall with Warwick Prep which includes two huge performance spaces, 12 practice rooms and two classrooms.



The Head Master and staff wanted to fill the school with as much student art as possible so it didn't feel like a blank white canvas, but more like a home. Dance and drama studios are also excellent.

Girls have the pleasure of eating lunch in an airy, spacious dining room showcasing another great sculptural maple ceiling. A typical day's menu could feature roasted fillet of salmon with avocado salsa, fully loaded salad bar with homemade soup, vegetable massaman curry with Thai basil rice and papaya salad, and a selection of desserts.

A lovely aspect is that every classroom looks over green, whether it's a school playing fields or the Quad. Other facilities within the school include an **Innovation Centre** with dry-wipe tables you can write and doodle on, creative ICT suite and study space; ICT suites and METEOR, one of 4 NAO robots in UK schools to aid the teaching of robotics. The girls have access to **Bridge House Theatre**, the 1000 seat Warwick Hall, **Bridge Sports Centre**, a swimming pool and sports facilities including a 3G rugby pitch, 5 netball and 6 tennis courts.

### BOARDING AND FLEXI-BOARDING

Boarding was introduced in 2023 in line with Warwick School for Years 9 to Sixth Form. King's High pupils reside at Way House, a beautiful Victorian house with room for up to 12. It is overseen by Kirsten Cooper, who is also Head of Lower Sixth Form, supported by Assistant Houseparent Chloe Britton-Powell, and House Matron. A House Parent is on duty every day, providing 24-hour care and support. Currently there are eight boarders including pupils from Hong Kong and China. The school is looking to grow and develop this provision.

### SIXTH@KING'S

**The Sixth Form Centre** is shared with Warwick School's boys. A 'Best of Both Worlds' approach favours single-sex classes with a joint Careers Hub, curriculum support, music, drama, sport, art lessons and a multitude of extracurricular clubs.

A cool space for teens, it's built over three floors with Scandi-style decor, clean white lines, coordinating furnishings and a splash of bright colours on feature walls. On the ground floor there's an open plan social space with floor-to-ceiling windows, trendy sofas, cool staircases, a mini canteen and cafe-style chairs and tables. A Careers

Hub with study areas, good for group discussions and colourful booths is located on the second floor.

The top floor with fantastic sweeping views to Warwick Castle is a quiet study space with bold yellow and orange feature walls and coordinating furnishings opening out onto a roof terrace with seating. A Code of Conduct was drawn up in advance by the students themselves, who also had a say in the colour scheme and furnishings. This new move so far has been very successful.

As well as offering a broad curriculum choice with more than 20 A Level subjects, Sixth Formers can complete the King's High Baccalaureate, a new qualification, accredited by EduQual and recognised by UCAS to develop skills highly sought by universities and future employers. A great initiative for girls in Years 10-12 is King's Links programme where the most recent Old Girls take current students around their university and give them the low-down on uni life.

Around 90% of the Upper Sixth go to their 'firm choice' destinations and around 75% go to Russell Group Universities. Each year at King's up to 10% of students gain places at Oxbridge or go on to study Medicine at university and there's a gradual rise in students heading to international universities in Europe or North America. There's a global university lead, so those looking to study overseas are in good hands. In addition, the number of students taking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), highly regarded by universities, has quadrupled, and nearly 90% achieved an A\* or A grade for their project. King's is also fully supportive of alternative pathways, such as prestigious degree apprenticeships.

### WHAT ELSE?

King's High is collaborating with other schools and leading the way to a refreshing and exciting new vision for GCSEs. Its progressive Global Changemaker Programme, now in its third year, has proved its most popular initiative to date offering units on **social justice, global citizenship, climate change, and law and the legal system** – as a replacement to one or two of their GCSE choices.

In its first year 40 per cent of pupils opted for one of these 'Future Ready' courses and this increased to 70 per cent in year two. The Head Master puts this popularity down in part to the strong emphasis on creative forms of assessment, rather than sitting exams.



By the time they go on to their A levels girls have experienced everything from giving TED-style talks to producing films, building sustainable machines and running a small business – as part of their core curriculum.

Girls also study engineering from Year 7. Inspired by the Midlands' leading automotive and aerospace industries, students engage in exciting STEM projects – from building and racing a Formula 24 car, to restoring a Rolls Royce Viper Jet Engine, constructing a heritage bi-plane, and launching rockets to 1000ft.

A recent Careers Fair connected students with more than 150 organisations, while others gain placements and apprenticeships with Dyson, JLR and Leonardo Helicopters. King's innovative Inspire Programme of enrichment events and activities, organised by Dr Phil Seal, Senior Deputy Head Academic, across the school is also very popular with pupils. It offers world-class speakers, trips, activities, clubs including Café Scientifique – an innovative Sixth Form science group with its own blog – and research projects. There's outings to the RSC, Symphony Hall, Art in Action, the Royal Geographical Society and Oxford Botanical Gardens. All interests are catered for from journalism to genome sequencing, philosophy to Model United Nations.

Another cool initiative is The Friday Afternoon Activity programme, open to pupils from King's and Warwick School from Year 9 upwards, and there's an extensive range and mix ranging from cyber security, glass and jewellery club, to life saving, throwing a pot and cooking for university. At King's, innovation is matched by compassion and a deep sense of community. Students volunteer weekly across hospices, hospitals, care homes, and schools. The school runs Saturday School, inclusive holiday programmes for disabled children, and partners with local charities like Evergreen and Let's Play. And as founders of the Warwick Schools Foundation Multi-Academy Trust, it has established a national model for state-independent partnerships.

## THE ARTS

Music flourishes here! The school has a specialist team of top highly regarded music teachers and more than 14 musical groups with around 250 girls attending rehearsals throughout the week during the day and after school. Young musicians are actively encouraged to form their own group and Year 7s all try out about 20 instruments throughout the year with specialist teachers.

Recently 35 young singers from King's High and Warwick School had a rare opportunity to join forces with the internationally acclaimed choir Ex Cathedra at Birmingham Town Hall. They were recently joined by conductor James Burton – formerly of Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Hallé and Schola Cantorum Oxford – for a rehearsal.

The music department has a busy concert schedule with major concerts, musicals, showcase recitals, jazz nights and an annual Carol Service at St Mary's Church.

King's High and Warwick Prep offer an all-through education experience from aged three to 18. A big recent change means that girls in Year 5 are now guaranteed a place at King's on meeting exam entry requirements. There's also a growing collaboration in sport and music, overseen by King's music department which includes the Year 2 Strings Project.

Creative arts are greatly valued here with joint school productions including recent productions of *Sweeney Todd* and *The Great Gatsby*. Pupils who discover they have artistic talents are encouraged by staff and distinguished visitors including poets, performers and artists provide inspiration, often through interactive workshops. Oh, and they use the RSC's costumes and facilities.

## SPORTS

Sports, too, is a very strong area with girls competing in county and national championships in tennis, netball, cricket, show jumping, athletics, skiing and clay-pigeon shooting. Earlier in 2025 the U13 netball squad were crowned ISA National Champions. The school was recently ranked as the 13th best independent girls' sporting school in the UK (School Sport Magazine) and has also been highly commended in Sports and Fine Arts in the ISA Awards.

## EXTRA-CURRICULAR

There are more than 260 co-curricular clubs and activities at lunchtime and after school including pop-up club for walks or cookery, orchestra, choir, water polo, rock climbing and Gardening Club. Here students not only look after the school's vegetable and herb garden, but are heavily involved in producing honey and eggs from King's High's very own chickens and beehives – there's even a Bee-Keeping Award!

There's been new introductions in sport too, with football and cricket added to the co-curricular offerings.



## 'CHANGEMAKING' IN ACTION

As soon as you step through the entrance into King's High you're greeted by the imposing Changemaker Gallery, plastered with images of inspirational women chosen by the girls.

Students were asked who inspired them and deserved a place on the Changemaker Wall, with winners including Jane Austen, Greta Thunberg and Malala Yousafzai. Most poignantly, front and centre of the gallery is a mirror, showing another budding changemaker.

Changemaking is a core value throughout the school and is something nurtured by teachers through volunteer work with local charities encouraging ethical and compassionate action.

There's the student-led Universal Justice Group, Foundation Equality Working Party and Environment Action Group. Highlights in the school's calendar include an Inter Faith Week and a summer Festival of Faith and Culture.

## WELLBEING

Pastorally strong. Wellbeing and mental health support has recently been given a shake-up and restructure here and it's headed up by the full-time director of wellbeing. There's also a mental health nurse, full-time counsellor and wellbeing mentor, school nurse and school practitioner. Girls can train to become wellbeing ambassadors (and there's currently 130 of them) receiving training in listening skills and safeguarding through the Diana Award. Students can self-refer to use services and parents can refer them too. Pastoral team meetings are held for every student and concerns are flagged on a traffic light system. The House Family mentoring system works very well – Year 7's are paired up with an older girl in Year 12 or 13, and a girl in Year 8. There's also a Year 7 Bonding Weekend to help new girls settle in.

Plants are in every classroom to promote wellbeing, mindfulness and purify the air, and it does definitely give a much more 'homely' vibe. There's also equine therapy available, zen mindfulness spaces – including a reflection garden created during the pandemic – quiet zones which I hear are very popular, mindfulness and yoga classes and a whole school wellbeing week. And of course, I can't forget the school dogs, Parsnip and Moose.

## ACADEMICS

Less than ten per cent of schools inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate achieve the coveted 'Significant Strength', and King's has been awarded this for its work on Changemaking – recognising pupils' active involvement in community service, sustainability projects, and global citizenship, as well as initiatives that foster respect, responsibility, and awareness of societal and ethical issues.

For the last three years King's has achieved record exam results in GCSE and A levels. GCSEs in 2025: 30% grades were the very top grade 9, 58% grades were 9-8 (A\* and above); 78% of all grades 9-7 (A\*-B) and 89% grades 9-6. There were 118 students in the year group.

2025 was another outstanding year of A level results with 44% of pupils gaining A\* to A, 71% A\* to B and 88% A\* to C. For the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) 92% of students achieved A\* and A grades and there were particular areas of successes – 82% of Art students achieved A\* and A grades, 80% of English Lit students, three quarters of Computer Science students and two thirds of French students achieved A\*-A grades.

The majority of girls in the 2025 cohort achieved places at their first choice. Destinations include Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial College London, Durham, St Andrews and Edinburgh going on to read Medicine, Law, Architecture, Motorsport Engineering, Veterinary Medicine, Archaeology and Anthropology, Dentistry, Neuroscience and much more. This was also a record-breaking year for the number of students achieving prestigious degree apprenticeships, securing places at top companies including Jaguar Land Rover, HSBC, UCB, Leonardo, Williams Racing F1, Arcadis and Morgan Sindall.

Each year between 5 and 10% of students take places for Medicine and Allied Sciences. Between a third and a quarter of our cohort apply for places at Oxford or Cambridge universities, with up to 10% achieving offers. Many go off to specialist schools and conservatoires including the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Central St Martin's, and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts (RADA).



## HEAD MASTER

Dr Stephen Burley joined King's High as Deputy Head Academic in 2017 and took over the role as Head Master from Richard Nicholson in 2021, who has now moved on to become Principal of the Warwick Schools Foundation (the Governing Body for Warwick School, King's High School and Warwick Preparatory School).

Dr Burley's encounters with inspirational teachers in his youth, growing up in the north east of England, bred a love of reading and literature that has driven his academic and intellectual interests ever since.

After studying English Literature at both University College London and Oxford University, Dr Burley's teaching career began in London and has taken him to Bogotá, Kent, Oxford and, most recently, to Warwick.

Impressively he's now spearheading a revolution of alternative GCSE models at King's High – through two 'future ready' courses which are proving hugely popular with the girls. These can be taken alongside exams in Social Justice or Global Citizenship and have the same outcome as a GCSE. Dr Burley is now part of a national conversation on the future of GCSEs.

The father-of-two is a qualified English teacher and in his spare time enjoys a little golf, reading, writing and travel. Dr Burley has already made steps to make classrooms flexible, with moveable desks and writeable boards, but over the next few years he's planning to make every classroom fully flexible – and full of those pretty plants too. He's brought in a new, cheaper uniform too which has been a hit so far with students and parents.

## QUIRKS

The school has a reputation for nurturing acting talent. Former pupils include the former *Game of Thrones* star Sophie Turner went on to star in the *X-Men* film series and ITV's 2024 drama series *Joan* playing diamond thief Joan Hannington. Sophie was the school Landor Association's first speaker and arrived with her then pop star fiancée Joe Jonas in tow!

Her *Game of Thrones* co-star Gemma Whelan – Yara Greyjoy – also attended King's High. She played Kate in Ben Elton's BBC Two comedy *Upstart Crow* based on the life of Shakespeare and appeared as DCI Kerry Henderson in the police drama series, *DI Ray*.

Gemma also revisited the school to give a Landor Association lecture. Talking about her acting career she revealed as well as GoT another favourite roles was *Killing Eve*. She said although her character was 'useless' she loved hanging out with Fiona Shaw and also Jodie Comer!

## MOBILE PHONE POLICY

King's High is a smart-phone free environment. In 2024 the school introduced lockable, signal-blocking phone pouches for all pupils in Years 7-11. On their way home, students tap their pouch on one of the many unlocking stations located at exit points. Sixth Form students are allowed to access their phones in the Sixth Form Centre only but not expected to use a phone pouch.

## FEES

Main school fees are £7,290 per term, full boarding is £17,880 per term, excluding lunches, while weekly boarding is £14, 557 per term. Music and LAMDA £39 per lesson, including £6.50 VAT (from Sept 2025) and lunches £294 per term. Bursaries and a wide range of scholarships are available.

## WORD ON THE GROUND

On my visit I chatted to teachers, a mum and a group of Sixth Form students who were ecstatic with the school's new facilities and the greater opportunities it allows. Other parents I've talked to spoke highly of "the brilliant pastoral care, supportive tutor staff and caring peers". They were extremely impressed by the wide variety of co-curricular activities, which are easily accessible and open to all abilities.

## THE MUDDY VERDICT

**Good for:** Inspiring confident, compassionate young women ready to make a difference in the world. King's places great emphasis on getting girls 'future ready' creating independent free-thinkers and well-rounded women with a forward-thinking curriculum. It celebrates individuality, diversity, and difference. There's a wonderful nurturing ethos here too; it has been chosen as a Showcase School by the Diana Award for its exemplary pupils who have trained as Wellbeing ambassadors to offer peer mentoring.

**Not for:** Hard to find fault with this lovely, academically strong secondary day school. Entry is competitive for Year 7 as it's academically selective. The school receives 200 applications for 96 places, with around 40% of the year group coming from Warwick Prep.

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**Aspire. Achieve. Enjoy.**