

# Academic achievement is part of the bigger picture

KING Edward VI High School for Girls (KEHS) consistently retains its position as the leading independent school in the Midlands and was recently placed as the top performing independent girls' school nationwide by *The Independent* newspaper in its 2010 annual A-level performance table.

The school is attended by some of the brightest young minds in the region and as such its exam results are consistently excellent, but the school views academic success as only one part of a well-rounded education.

Community involvement and enrichment activities are viewed as equally important and provide additional dimensions to girls' experiences while at KEHS,

above and beyond purely academic achievements. The school actively encourages girls of all ages to participate in a huge variety of extra-curricular activities which embrace a multitude of disciplines from art and design, to science-based activities, performing arts and sporting events.

Highlights from the current academic year include a fabulous production of *Hairspray*, participation in the Comenius Programme – an international study of astronomy – a fashion 'up-cycling' initiative and a series of stunning concerts.

As formal recognition of its commitment to the importance of enrichment activities, KEHS was one of the first schools to pilot the AQA Baccalaureate and the ini-

tiative has been a resounding success. The AQA Bacc, which includes a minimum of 100 hours of enrichment activities, is an overreaching qualification studied alongside the existing A-level curriculum. It recognises that education is not just about academic examinations, the ethos at the heart of KEHS.

KEHS principal, Sarah Evans, explains why the AQA Bacc was introduced.

"What I love about the AQA Bacc is that it's both rigorous and flexible. It's based on A-levels and has to include general studies or critical thinking, both of which ensure that even if girls have chosen to really specialise in their A-level subjects, they have a breadth of knowledge.

"We like the depth of A-levels. Our students relish drilling down into subjects and having the time and freedom to read around topics that hugely interest them."

The Bacc extended project can be the jewel in the crown of a student's sixth form achievement. It is a piece of work outside of any A-level syllabus where students pursue a personal interest as far as they can.

They take control of the planning, research and presentation that can take the form of a significant essay or include creative pieces such as poetry, film or a play.

Sarah added: "The girls have worked on some amazing topics. Many may well have found a lifetime's passion in their subject."