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News

A taste of school life in 1883

PUPILS at Edgbaston-based King Edward VI High School for Girls (KEHS) had a taste of school-life in 1883, in a special day designed to commemorate the 125th anniversary of the region's top-performing independent girls' school.

KEHS was founded in 1883 as part of the Foundation of the Schools of King Edward VI in Birmingham, a charitable institution which also operates neighbouring independent boys' school, KES and five voluntary aided state schools around the city.

1883 day began with all staff and pupils arriving at school on foot and by bicycle, dressed in period costume. A formal staff briefing was held by current Head, Miss Sarah Evans, followed by a whole school assembly which included long prayers, hymns and a deportment check on the way out of the hall!



Alison Young, Head of RS, Rodney Moore, TA and Miss Sarah Evans, KEHS Principal

Lunch consisted of a traditional Victorian 3-course dinner in the dining hall with sixth formers taking a lead role in serving food to the younger girls. Girls who brought packed lunches were asked to bring bread and fruit, in keeping with tradition.

The day's lessons were all taught using relevant subject matter from 1883 in the teaching style of the time. Lower 6th pupil, Grace Baxter, who took part in English, Biology and Chemistry lessons explained, 'It was really different. Some of the teachers got properly into character and tried to remain quite strict as they would have done back then. We used text books from the 1880s in chemistry which was really interesting.'

1883 day finished with a Victorian tea party which parents and former pupils had all been invited to. A traditional high-tea consisting of sandwiches, scones, Victoria sponge, lemonade and tea had been prepared by the girls, catering staff, the food science department and parents and was enjoyed in the dining hall.

KEHS has held a diverse programme of events to celebrate its 125th year, including a number of fund-raising activities to boost the 125 Bursary Appeal. 1883 Day was designed to provide the girls with an insight into school-life 125 years ago as an enjoyable finale to the anniversary celebrations.

One further event is set for Monday 29 June. An art exhibition in the evening will show a range of works from the whole school community who have been asked to reflect on what KEHS means to them. A specially commissioned portrait by Stephen Earl Rogers will be unveiled and form part of the school's permanent art collection. Stephen Earl Rogers has a painting in this year's BP Portrait Exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery.

Principal, Miss Sarah Evans, has the final word, '1883 day has been great fun and the girls and staff have all made the most of it and stayed in character throughout the day. I have thoroughly enjoyed acting out my role as first KEHS Head, Miss Creak, as it is through her vision that the school has evolved and become the centre of excellence that it is today.'



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