



## A Look at Kings' History

- 1963 Excavations start for the new school, but the discovery of the Saxon Palace delayed the building programme for one year whilst the Archaeologists began their work.
- 1964 The new Kings of Wessex Secondary Modern School opened on the present site with Harry Broome as Headteacher.
- 1971 Preparations were being made for the new comprehensive system.
- 1974 The junior provision moved to Hugh Sexey Middle School.
- 1975 The Headship of the Upper School was advertised and Keith Herring was appointed one year ahead of reorganisation. Harry Broom (Head of The Kings of Wessex Secondary Modern School) was appointed Head of Fairlands Middle School and Malcolm Ravenscroft (Head of Sexey's Grammar School, Blackford) was appointed Head of the Hugh Sexey Middle school on the Grammar School Site, which was adapted with two new year blocks provided for 9 and 10 years-olds. Fairlands was a new purpose-built Middle School.
- 1975 There was great controversy whether the school would be called The Hugh Sexey or The Kings of Wessex Upper School.
- On appointment, Keith Herring was asked what the name of the school should be and, as an outsider, had no hesitation in suggesting The Kings of Wessex Upper School because of the historic nature of the site on which it was placed.
- 1975 Blackford Primary was closed and sold off to form a £40,000 fund, from which the Blackford Educational Charity generated income and helped the village and the three schools, which Blackford children attended.
- East Brent Junior became East Brent First School; East Brent Infants became a Community Centre.
- The whole of the Cheddar Valley met together for a joint occasion in which Barry Fell and his team visited from Minehead to talk about 5-18 years three-tier system.
- 1975/6 Staffing appointments had to be made across the Cheddar Valley and staff were given the option of applying for their own posts or posts in other schools. Keith Herring had some problems because of course many staff were interested in the senior posts in the Upper School.
- 1976 Keith Herring took over the Secondary Modern School to give Harry Broome the opportunity to plan the new Fairlands Middle School.
- Brent Knoll Primary School remained part of King Alfred's catchment area, although many years later the opportunity to have a joint school for Brent Knoll, East Brent and Lympsham was turned down by the people of the area.
- Sept 1976 The Heads' Advisory Group was formed and met at each of the twelve schools in turn in alphabetical order.

Liaison pre-1976 between the Secondary and Primary Schools did not exist. There were certainly no Transfer Days.

Barry Taylor, Somerset CEO, produced an introduction to the Cheddar Valley reorganisation flier.

Mary Hall was the Area Education Officer, followed by Neil Widery, Don Parkinson, John Rose and Colin Phillips.

The Kings of Wessex P.T.A hired a train to York with 500 people on board from all sections of the Cheddar Valley community, notably families, teachers. It was a wonderful event.

1976-78 A Music Club established after school and this continued for some time. Pat Dams (former Deputy Headteacher David's wife), was briefly secretary.

The link between DIGS and HAG became a problem as there was some duplication. (The DIG).

1977 The National Savings Evening, which had involved joint contributions from the various schools, was translated into a new evening. The Palace site was surrounded by 1,000 members of the community watching small musical and dance items from each of the First, Middle and Upper Schools.

1977 There were no INSET days, but two organisations were formed: the Somerset INSET group called SCIPRAC with Chris Grey heavily involved (he sadly died in 1994) and also DIGS, producing two INSET days.

1977-83 First School Workshops held, including a Country Dance Festival and a Music Festival. The "Savings Evenings" continued for several years until attendance fell off. Also, there was a touring company called the Ballet Go Round.

Early 1980's Somerset cut all Music tuition! Bev and Keith set up private tutors, mainly using RAF personnel. Bob Carter, Kings of Wessex music specialist did the musical vetting. The current brass music teacher Anne Higgs was one of our finds.

1983 Children at 4-years + enter First School with a single intake.

1986 SAPHTO (Somerset Association of Primary Headteacher's Organisation), was formed and was very influential within the LEA.

Following The Kings of Wessex's designation as a Community School, the Community Education programme extended to the First and Middle Schools with Holly Cole being appointed eventually as a part-time Co-Coordinator of these initiatives.

1988 The Kings of Wessex had its HMI Inspection.

The Kings of Wessex built the Corrick Centre, Sixth Form accommodation and some further laboratory accommodation.  
GCSE's were introduced.

1989 Jim Callaghan spoke about the need for the reform in education, heralding the development of the National Curriculum.

Local Management of Schools (LMS) was introduced at The Kings of Wessex as part of a pilot scheme.

Barry Parkin, Headteacher at Fairlands Middle School, started Transfer Days with the help of Don Parkinson and payment for transport.

Colin Phillips introduced and financed release days for Heads. Meetings were held at the Fenny Castle, Walnut Tree etc.

From 1994, The Kings of Wessex School Leisure Centre was used as a venue.

Joint Conferences were also held, including an HMI key speaker and a conference organised by the Somerset Education Centre at Bridgwater in which Jennifer Wisker from The Kings of Wessex gave the lead talk.

1989-90 There were joint ventures, e.g. Students Insurance Scheme, organised by Barbara Lower organised with current numbers 500+ Bev organised the Cheddar Valley Music Scheme.

When Bev stepped in, the overspend in Term 1 was £15,000 all the financing and procedures for visiting teachers. At one time 500+ children had instrumentals tuition from SUMMITS.

Five "Baker Days" were introduced for staff training, taking five days from staff holiday.

The influx from King Alfred's catchment area became bigger and bigger to such an extent that Sexey's School became full. Children were transferred to Fairlands Middle School.

A need for curriculum continuity from 5-16 became a major issue - and still is - resulting in the Cheddar Valley Development group annual conferences.

Hugh Sexey's considered going Grant Maintained only to find Jennifer Wisker torpedoed the idea by setting up LEA Services on a purchase/non purchase basis.

1990 The link with schools in Kenya started with Limaru Boys and Girls Schools and later a link was established with Bungoma High School for Boys and Cardinal Otunga High School for Girls. Pen friendships were established in the Middle and Upper Schools and links with some of the First Schools, e.g. East Brent.

1992 The famous HAG meeting at East Brent. Following the earlier introduction of the National Curriculum, and frustrations, particularly in the First School, we all realised that liaison was not as strong as we had felt. (HAG Meetings took place on the third Tuesday of term or the Tuesday of the second full week). Later this went to two meeting per term.

There was a joint Governors, Training Day at Fairlands School.

HAG meetings occurred every term without fail, with very full attendances throughout the time from 1976 onwards; from 1989 onwards became two or three meetings a year, as well as a joint Cheddar Valley meeting.

1992 The First School's musical festival was established through the initiative of Bob Gibbons. More recently, and with the support of John Johnson, we have now had three.

Axbridge First School Nursery opened and 3-year olds were able to attend.

There was LMS for all except Wedmore.

New Wedmore First School was opened.

1992-3 Axbridge First School had major extensions.

- 1993 Hugh Sexey Middle School had major extensions.
- 1993 Student parties conducted an exchange, and from 1991 onwards ex-students in their year off travelled to Kenya for three-six months.
- 1994 The Kings of Wessex Leisure Centre opened  
Available for the First and Middle Schools, as well as the Upper School.
- First School initiatives included a Cricket League on KWIK.  
(Weare School lost in the County Final!).
- The Kings of Wessex Learning Resource Centre opened (thanks to support from parents and the community) and its first I.T. suite was developed.
- The Joint I.T working group from all schools started to use The Kings of Wessex facilities.
- Joint Governors met in the LRC. Also SAG (Somerset Association of Governors) held meetings at Fairlands.
- The Heads from Kenya visited England and in turn, Keith Herring and his wife visited Kenya. Several staff from each of the schools have since returned visits.
- Dec 1994 Keith Herring retires from Headship of The Kings of Wessex School
- Jan 1995 Chris Richardson appointed Headteacher, The Kings of Wessex School.
- Dave Cameron appointed Headteacher, Hugh Sexey's Middle School.
- 1995 Another Joint Conference is being planned.  
Much joint work has been done with regard to the continuity of record cards and administration arrangements.
- Curriculum continuity is being considered, although English work was transferred from First to Middle and Middle to Upper many years ago (in Malcolm Litten's time). Also, Dick Strong produced records for Maths continuity.
- The Joint Governors meeting is reconvened as an adjunct of HAG, demonstrating the unity of the Cheddar Valley from 5-18-years.
- Hugh Sexey Middle School and Fairlands Middle School has their Ofsted inspections
- Brent Knoll, having lost most of its top two years, is trying to become a First School as part of the Cheddar Valley catchment area (it was however, turned down!).
- The Kings of Wessex School is full in all its main years, as is Hugh Sexey Middle School. Fairlands is full in its top two years.
- Feb 1995 School Production of *'The Hound of the Baskervilles'*.
- Kings won the Somerset Business Partnership Award.
- July 1995 Cheddar Pageant Celebrating 100-years of village history.  
The Millennium Picnic and Queen's Golden Jubilee Picnic took place at Kings.
- March 1996 First Ofsted Inspection - Kings is judged to be a Good school.

- Feb 1997 Chris Woodhead, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools writes to report that Kings has been identified as one of the country's best schools (based on Ofsted and HMI inspections in 1996).
- March 1997 Discovery of Cheddar Man – DNA testing revealed a genetic link between a 9,000 year old skeleton found in Cheddar Caves and Head of History, Adrian Targett!
- May 1997 Tenth Anniversary of the Signing of the Cheddar-Felsberg Twinning Agreement.
- June 1997 Kings Received a Successful School Award (presented by from Dr Kim Howell, New Minister for Lifelong Learning).
- July 1997 Cheddar Valley Arts Festival.
- March 1998 School Production of *'Guys and Dolls'*.
- Summer 1998 Extension to the School Playing Fields (four additional pitches).
- Autumn 1988 HMI Visit to the Technology Department.  
The Science Laboratories Extension and Refurbishment completed.
- Oct 1998 Swimming Pool Opened by David Heathcoat-Amory MP.
- Jan 1999 £300,000 to build new English classrooms (and replace the temporary classrooms).  
Work halted on the new English building by the discovery of Roman remains (including a Roman barn, pottery, and a large number of coins)!
- March 1999 School Production of *'Brunel'*.
- May 1999 Kings Successful in Sportsmark Gold Award application (awarded by The English Sports Council).  
Kings Wins "Education Extra" Award (in recognition of extracurricular activities).
- Summer 1999 Work underway for the Whole-School Fibre Optic Network.
- Autumn 1999 First "Arts Week".
- Spring 2000 New Photography "Art and Dark Room" opened.
- July 2000 Technological Innovations!  
First Interactive Whiteboards arrive.  
New ICT suite built in Maths Department.  
Data logging introduced in Science.  
School Intranet developed.  
Interactive Learning Package in SEN.
- Jan 2001 Investors in People Award.
- April 2001 DfEE School Achievement Award – for improved examination results during 1997-2000.  
School Production of *'Grease'*.
- Sept 2001 New Maths/Special Educational Needs Block opened.

Specialist Technology College Status (DfES designation) (increased funding for Design Technology, Maths, Science and IT.  
Partnerships developed with Cheddar Valley Group of Schools and the “Wired Wedmore” project).

- Feb 2002 School Production of *'A Little Shop of Horrors'*.
- May 2002 Sportsmark Gold Award (second time!).
- July 2002 Creative Arts gains Artsmark Award.
- Autumn 2002 Wedmore-Based Computer Centre “IT for the Terrified” Won European Union E-Week Award in Paris.
- Sept 2002 New Design and Manufacturing Centre opened.
- Dec 2002 Ofsted Inspection - Kings is judged to be a Good school with a Very Good Sixth Form.
- Feb 2003 School Production: *'A Midsummer Night's Dream'*.
- Sept 2003 Church of England Section 23 Inspection.
- Sept 2003 Re-Introduction of School Blazers.
- Extension to the Learning Resource Centre opened
- Feb 2004 School Production: *'Les Misérables'*.
- March 2004 First Target Setting Day when parents and students meet on an individual basis with Tutors.  
Re-Assessment of Investors in People Status (*retained*).
- June 2004 First Middle Schools Master Classes (Year 8's).
- Sept 2004 Laptop Computers for all Teachers.  
Wireless Network in Operation.
- Timings of the School Day changed.
- Feb 2005 School Production: *'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'*.  
Awarded Sportsmark.
- March 2005 Top in the County League Tables for Year 9 SAT's Results.
- May 2005 Awarded the Arts Council Artsmark Silver Award in partnership with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- July 2005 Barry Parkin retires from Headship of Fairlands Middle School.
- Sept 2005 Peter Elmy appointed Headteacher, Fairlands Middle School.
- Dec 2005 School Production of *'Blood Brothers'*.  
Launch of Student Information Systems and plasma information screens located around school.

- Jan 2006 Discovery of a Roman Skeleton on the site of the new Languages and ICT building.
- Jan 2006 HMI Science Post-16 Case Study.  
Due to the exceptionally high take-up of Science at AS/A Level Subject Leader for Science and Assistant Headteacher/Teacher of Physics Dave Kelly present at The Royal Society, London
- Jan/Feb 2006 HMI Science Subject Inspection – judged to be Good.
- March 2006 School Catering Team Scolarest Wins Healthy Eating Award.  
  
Olympic Athlete, Dame Kelly Holmes visits and teaches a P.E. lesson.  
(Western Daily Press competition in conjunction with Sainsbury's)
- April 2006 Kings in successful in its renewal of Specialist Schools Technology College status (until August 2009).
- July 2006 Year 9 Production of Shakespeare's of *'Macbeth'* - set in the newspaper offices of "The Daily Blah".
- Sept 2006 The Kings of Wessex becomes a Foundation School  
  
"A Promise to Africa" is launched to commemorate 30-years of the Cheddar Valley comprehensive education system to raise money for educational projects in the Masindi District of Uganda.  
  
The summer's busy building programme is complete:  
the new Languages building, Corrick Theatre extension, refurbishment of the Sixth Form Common Room – and the staff toilets!
- Oct 2006 Building work begins on the new Drama Centre (due to be completed Autumn Term 2007).
- Jan 2007 School Production of *'Grease'*.  
  
Praise Post Cards launched using students' artwork
- Feb 2007 Kings becomes a member of the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust "60%Club" for gaining over 60% Grades A\* to C at GCSE, including Maths and English.  
  
Kings also retained its Investors in People status and was one of the first secondary schools in Somerset to gain the new Financial Management Standard in Schools.
- March 2007 MuKow successful in bid for £10,000 "Awards for All" lottery-funded grant to buy a new grand piano.
- April 2007 Rotary Young Musician of the Year competition held at Kings.  
  
Ofsted Inspection – Kings is judged to be a Good school with Outstanding features.
- May 2007 Year 9 Production of Shakespeare's *Much ado about Nothing* outside in the 12th Century Saxon Palace ruins,  
  
Ex-Bath and England Rugby Player Gareth Chilcott attended Sixth Form assembly to receive Charities Week cheque as Honorary President of Somerset Wooden Spoon.
- June 2007 SIAS (Church of England) Inspection – Kings is judged to be an Outstanding Church School.

Feb 2008 School production of *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.

Feb 2009 School production of *Animal Farm*.  
Successful campaign to secure future funding from Sedgemoor District Council for Swimming pool.

Dec 2009 Royal Navy visit with Merlin Helicopter.

Feb 2010 School judged to be Outstanding in Ofsted inspection.  
School production of *High School Musical*

March 2010 Academy judged to be Outstanding in Church of England inspection.

June 2010 Invitation by Secretary of State Michael Gove to apply for fast track academy status.

July 2010 Sixth Form Operation Wallacea trip to South Africa.

Nov 2010 Headteacher visits 10 Downing Street and meets with Prime Minister David Cameron and Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove.

Feb 2011 School production of *Pride and Prejudice*.

June 2011 Conversion to academy status after one year delay caused by land issues relating to the Diocese.

Feb 2012 School production of *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Feb 2013 School production of *Hairspray*.

April 2013 Work completed on recladding and installing new windows on the main building block

Sept 2013 Work completed on recladding and installing new windows on Technology and Science block

Sept-Dec 2013 Headteacher, Chris Richardson undertakes school teacher fellowship at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.

Feb 2014 School production of *Assassins*.

Sept 2014 Bursar, Chris Brown retires after 21 years' service at the Academy.

Oct 2014 Keith Perry takes up post as Bursar.

Feb 2015 Year 9 science students awarded Bronze Crest Award by British Science Association.

March 2015 Academy judged to be Good overall with Outstanding Sixth Form in Ofsted inspection.  
Academy judged to be Outstanding in Church of England inspection.

April 2015 School production of *Much ado about Nothing*.

Sept 2015 The Kings Café is completed and opened.

Feb 2016 School production of *Gyps and Dolls*.

June 2016 Wessex Learning Trust is established.



- Aug 2016 Academy achieves its best ever GCSE results placing it in top 6% of schools nationally for progress.
- Sept 2016 Axbridge, Weare and Wedmore First Schools join the Wessex Learning Trust.
- Sept 2016 Academy celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> annual awards evening.
- Nov 2016 Hugh Sexey, Mark, East Brent and Lympsham First Schools join the Wessex Learning Trust.
- Feb 2017 School production of 'Chicago'.
- April 2017 Work completed on recladding and installing new windows on the Sixth Form block.
- July 2017 Executive Headteacher, Chris Richardson retires after almost 23 years' service at the Academy.  
Deputy Headteacher, Barbara Marshall retires after almost 17 years' service at the Academy.
- Sept 2017 Gavin Ball takes up post as Executive Headteacher.

### **Academy Leadership Team (as at July 2017)**

Chris Richardson	Executive Headteacher
Barbara Marshall	Deputy Headteacher
Christian Hughes	Assistant Headteacher
Sarah Hobbs	Assistant Headteacher
Rachel Hopwood	Assistant Headteacher
Keith Perry	Bursar

### **Cheddar Valley Headteachers (as at July 2017)**

Chris Richardson	The Kings of Wessex Academy*
Peter Elmy	Fairlands Middle School
Paul Tatterton	Hugh Sexey Middle School*
Lorna Richardson	Axbridge First School Academy*
Maggie Wilson	Cheddar First School
Mike Jory	Draycott and Shipham First Schools
Fiona Robertson	East Brent and Lympsham and First School Academies*
Anna Yates	Mark First School Academy*
Denise Mawdsley	Weare First School Academy*
Jackie Hipwell	Wedmore First School Academy*

*\*Wessex Learning Trust Schools*

### **☆Compiled by Bev Hearn and Chris Richardson**

(Headteacher of Weare First School 1967 – 1997 and Headteacher of The Kings of Wessex Academy 1995 – 2017)