

Queen Ethelburga's College

Formerly, The Faculty at Queen Ethelburga's

2024 ISA Awards Senior School of the Year



History of the school

Founded in 1912, Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate (QE) is a leading independent school situated within 220 acres of landscaped parkland in North Yorkshire. Over the years, QE has evolved into a thriving educational community comprising four schools, including two senior schools: the College and the Faculty. While each had its own distinctive identity and pathway, both were united by a shared commitment to excellence, inclusion, and innovation. At the time of receiving the ISA Senior School of the Year award, the Faculty of Queen Ethelburga's served students in Years 10 to 13, offering a unique and flexible educational route that combined academic achievement with vocational and creative opportunity. The Faculty model enabled students to pursue A Levels or BTECs within a structure that recognised and supported individual talents, interests, and ambitions. It was a vibrant learning environment where each student's personal and academic development was paramount.

The Faculty was known for its specialist pathways such as the Performance Sport Programme and the Academy of Dramatic Arts (ADA), which offered structured support in sport, performing arts, and new digital disciplines such as Esports. These innovations helped to establish Queen Ethelburga's as a school where breadth of opportunity matched academic depth. At the Faculty, the guiding ethos was to provide students with the time, space and support



Case Study

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Queen Ethelburga's College

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to “be the best they can be with the gifts that they have.” As part of its continuous journey to meet the evolving needs of students, QE has since made the strategic decision to combine the Faculty with the College to form a single, united senior school. This unification builds on the strengths of both previous structures and ensures every student benefits from an even wider range of opportunities. The move reflects the school's desire to streamline academic provision, promote greater collaboration, and create a more cohesive and inclusive community.

The integration enables staff to work more closely across disciplines, enhances peer-to-peer learning, and offers all students access to the same high standards of teaching, enrichment, and pastoral care. Importantly, it allows the school to preserve the best of what made the Faculty so successful—its flexibility, creativity, and focus on individual pathways—while embedding these into a comprehensive and unified curriculum model. The result is a senior school that is greater than the sum of its parts: rich in opportunity, focused on excellence, and united in vision.



Dan Manchin, Principal

Aims

At the heart of Queen Ethelburga's educational philosophy is a belief that every student should be supported to flourish in their own way. The Faculty model, celebrated at the time of the ISA award, enabled this through a broad and inclusive approach that recognised academic, creative, and vocational talents equally. Now, with a fully integrated senior school model, QE continues to uphold these values while extending the benefits of flexibility and enrichment across the entire pupil body.

Key aims of the school's provision include:

- Offering a diverse curriculum that includes A Levels, BTECs, and innovative subject pathways that reflect real-world demands and student interests.
- Maintaining flexible timetabling to allow students to devote focused time to areas of personal strength, such as elite sports or creative arts.
- Embedding wellbeing and pastoral care into every aspect of school life, ensuring students feel safe, supported, and able to take intellectual and personal risks.
- Nurturing future readiness by promoting leadership, critical thinking, and collaboration within academic and co-curricular programmes.
- Strengthening a shared community ethos where inclusivity, aspiration, and mutual respect underpin every student's experience.

The school is deeply committed to ensuring that students not only achieve academic success but also build the skills, character, and mindset needed to thrive in life beyond QE. By offering curriculum pathways that embrace both traditional and emerging disciplines—such as Computer Science, Performing Arts, Sport Science, and Esports—the school allows learners to align their education with their future ambitions. Students are given real agency in shaping their own learning journey, empowering them to take ownership of their development and to discover new passions.



Beyond academic excellence, QE prioritises the holistic development of every student. Opportunities for leadership, entrepreneurship, teamwork, and service are embedded throughout the curriculum and co-curricular programmes. Students are encouraged to lead clubs, coach younger peers, and participate in school-wide initiatives such as charity events, performances, and competitive competitions. These experiences help foster confidence, resilience, and social awareness—ensuring that pupils leave QE not only well-qualified but well-rounded, compassionate, and prepared to contribute meaningfully to the world around them.

Outcomes

The impact of the Faculty's distinctive approach was instrumental in securing the ISA Senior School of the Year award and has continued to inform the direction of the unified senior school. During its tenure as a separate school, the Faculty produced exceptional

student outcomes, not only in examination results but in personal growth and wider achievement.

Students benefitted from dedicated time within their timetable to pursue passions in sport and the arts. The Performance Sport Pathway enables student-athletes to dedicate an additional five hours per week to training, resulting in QE athletes competing successfully at ISA national events. One student, once disengaged from sport, thrived as a competitive sprinter after accessing this pathway, a transformation that exemplifies the school's capacity to nurture potential in their students.

The launch of BTEC Esports marked another milestone. Within one year, it transformed student engagement—especially for pupils who had not flourished in more traditional subjects. The course provided a collaborative, student-led learning environment that promoted tactical thinking, leadership, and digital fluency. Students captained teams, competed nationally, and found purpose and pride in an area of personal interest. It also demonstrated QE's commitment to preparing students for the industries of the future.



Success extended to the performing and creative arts. The Academy of Dramatic Arts offers elite training in acting, dance, and musical theatre, with students regularly securing places at prestigious institutions such as the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. The Gold Artsmark Award, achieved in 2023, recognised the school's outstanding and inclusive arts provision. A remarkable 39% of students in Years 9-13 were enrolled in arts subjects, underlining the scale and impact of creative engagement across the school. These outcomes: academic, personal, and professional, are a legacy of the Faculty's innovative model and are now embedded into the culture of the combined senior school.

The success of QE's approach is also reflected in the personal stories of transformation experienced by students across the academic spectrum. For some, the opportunities to engage with vocational or creative pathways have reignited a love of learning, leading to improved attendance, behaviour, and engagement across all subjects. Students with previously limited academic confidence have found success through applied subjects and co-curricular roles, gaining qualifications and experiences that are shaping their post-18 ambitions. Others have flourished in leadership roles, whether captaining Esports teams, leading arts performances, or mentoring peers in sports, demonstrating that student voice and responsibility are woven into the fabric of QE life.

The decision to unify the Faculty and College was made with the pupil experience at its heart. As Queen Ethelburga's moves into its next chapter, it does so with a clear purpose: to build a senior school that honours its past, reflects the future, and ensures every student can thrive.



Next Steps

Looking ahead, Queen Ethelburga's continues to invest in its future as a fully unified senior school. The integration of the Faculty and College is enabling even greater collaboration, resource-sharing, and consistency in the student experience. Building on the successes of both schools, QE is extending access to high-level sport, creative arts, and digital innovation across the entire senior phase.

Plans include:

- Expanding the Esports programme and investing in upgraded gaming and analysis facilities to meet growing demand from younger students.
- Enhancing the Performance Sport Pathway by formalising links with professional clubs and governing bodies across athletics, rugby, and swimming.
- Extending the reach of ADA with more productions, visiting artists, and progression routes into the creative industries.
- Further embedding personalised timetables to allow all students, regardless of academic route, to pursue passions in and beyond the classroom.
- Developing new wellbeing and leadership programmes that reflect the challenges of modern adolescence and promote resilience and global citizenship.

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