

# King Edward VI Grammar School

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**PR 2009/10 004**  
**13 November 2009**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **KEGS' DARWIN CENTRE EVOLVES**

It's officially open! King Edward VI Grammar School's new £2.4 million state-of-the-art Sixth Form centre has been formally opened today (Friday 13 November 2009) by Professor Richard Dawkins, one of the world's leading experts on evolutionary biology and Darwinism.

After much careful deliberation, 'The Darwin Centre' has been chosen as the name for the new three-storey facility. With the building reaching completion almost exactly 150 years after the publication of Charles Darwin's 'On the Origin of Species', the connection was inescapable to the KEGS community. It links with Darwin already being featured in a stained-glass window in the school's historic library and the name also sums up the evolutionary process by which the new centre has been created.

Commenting on the opening, Headteacher Tom Sherrington said:- "It is a great honour that Professor Dawkins has accepted our invitation to open the Darwin Centre. He has a fabulous gift for expressing the wonder, beauty and truth of evolution by natural selection and I am delighted to welcome him to KEGS on this very special occasion."

After the official naming ceremony Professor Dawkins addressed the whole school and then took part in a lively debate on evolution with Sixth Form students, led by the KEGS' Debating Society.

The Darwin Centre is the result of a fundraising campaign which raised almost half of the £2.4 million total cost from generous benefactors and donors in the space of nine months during the 2006/7 academic year – making it one of the most successful state school fundraising appeals ever.

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## KEGS' Darwin Centre evolves/2

It houses the new Sixth Form study area, careers library, common room and a new classroom and links directly into the original school buildings. As part of the project, a new reception area has been built in the Victorian building which provides visitors to the school with a vastly improved entrance and waiting area.

Design and build was kept truly local with Chelmsford-based architects the John Finch Partnership responsible for its cutting-edge design, and building contractors, TJ Evers Ltd from Tiptree, for its construction.

Tom Sherrington continued: "To watch the Darwin Centre evolve over the past eighteen months has brought a real sense of excitement to KEGS and to see it now being used and enjoyed by our Sixth Formers is fantastic. The space provides an inspirational environment where students can reach their full potential.

"Darwin was one of England's most visionary thinkers who embodied dedication and perseverance in the pursuit of scientific truth, and he will provide a fitting role model to inspire KEGS students for decades to come.

"We are justly proud of this incredible facility which must rate as one of the best anywhere in the country. The new building is first-class and will serve as a lasting legacy to all those, both within the KEGS and the wider Chelmsford communities, who contributed so generously to its creation.

"On behalf of the students and staff of KEGS, present and future, I would like to express my sincere thanks to everyone connected with bringing this wonderful building to life."

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