

Queensbridge School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103497
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355392
Inspection dates	26–27 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Nada Trikic HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	671
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jennifer Baines
Headteacher	Helen Reeves (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	26 September 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors observed 33 lessons and 33 teachers, and held meetings with the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation including improvement plans, the analysis and tracking of students' progress, records of classroom observation, attendance and exclusion data and monitoring information. Inspectors considered the the outcomes of the analysis of 95 student, 55 staff and 320 parent and carer questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively are leaders tackling variation in standards between subjects and groups of learners?
- How do leaders ensure that the academic and personal needs of girls are met?
- What is the impact of actions to raise standards in English and mathematics for students who speak English as an additional language?
- How effectively is good practice in teaching shared?

Information about the school

Queensbridge is a smaller than average secondary school with significantly more boys than girls. Just under three quarters of the school population is from minority ethnic backgrounds. Students of Pakistani heritage form the largest group, followed by Asian British, Bangladeshi and Black British Caribbean, with a range of other smaller groups represented. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is high with a few at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. An above average proportion of students are identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most of these students have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs is above average.

Queensbridge is part of an extended schools partnership. It makes joint provision for a small number of Key Stage 4 students with local schools, and has links with a special school on the same site. Queensbridge is part of the South Area Network of 14 schools that work together in South Birmingham. The school has specialist status for visual and performing arts, and holds a number of awards including Arts Mark Gold, Sportsmark, International Schools and Investors in People.

Queensbridge is a leadership partner school. The substantive headteacher has supported a local secondary school since January 2009. An acting headteacher was appointed to Queensbridge at that time.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Queensbridge is a satisfactory and improving school. It has significant strengths in its provision for students' personal development and the promotion of visual and performing arts. These, along with a very diverse range of productive local partnerships, help to promote a highly cohesive and welcoming community for students and staff. The school provides an inclusive and vibrant learning experience which parents and carers value. The outstanding curriculum continues to evolve. Students explore the world around them, and see themselves as global citizens. Students respond positively to the many opportunities to be creative and imaginative in the specialist subjects of music, dance and drama and across the wider curriculum. As a result, they grow in confidence and make an exceptional contribution to the school and local community. Student leaders run lunchtime activities and act as mentors to Year 7 form groups; sports leaders run fitness sessions in the local special school. Special events are arranged for girls, who are in the minority, to build confidence and instil a strong sense of identity. Girls value the residential experiences, induction programmes and house system that encourage friendships across different form and year groups.

Standards are rising but remain variable across subjects and groups of learners. Attainment is average overall. In 2010, there was a significant increase to 83% in the proportion of students to gain five or more high-grade GCSE passes, well above average. This was supported by success in vocational courses such as music and dance. The proportion of students to gain five or more A* to C passes including English and mathematics rose to 47%, a school record. However, standards in mathematics are below average and the gap in attainment between English and mathematics is larger than the national gap. Boys' results matched the national average but girls did less well because of weaker performance in mathematics. Action has been taken to strengthen links between subject leaders, and early entry results indicate an improved picture for girls. The Black Caribbean group reached average national standards, and students eligible for free school meals exceeded them, but the attainment of students of Pakistani heritage was below average. Although assessment information is gathered regularly to target support, there is insufficient emphasis on evaluations linked to groups of learners. Plans are not sufficiently robust to measure the impact of the range of strategies employed or to identify training needs to meet the complex needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, or those who speak English as an additional language.

Rates of progress have improved in recent years, boosted by the outstanding curriculum, the positive attitudes to learning of the vast majority of learners, pockets of good teaching and improved attendance. In 2010, there was a significant rise in the proportion of students to make the progress expected from Key Stage 2 in both English and mathematics. Progress is good overall. All groups of learners make at least satisfactory progress and many make good progress from their starting points in Year 7. Teaching

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makes a variable contribution to the progress of students. Although there is much good teaching, the quality of students' learning experiences can vary from inadequate to outstanding. Staff confidence is growing in the use of assessment in lesson planning but is inconsistent. On a few occasions, lessons are disrupted and this has a negative impact on the pace and quality of learning. Behaviour is satisfactory. The vast majority of students behave well but students, parents and carers express concern about occasional incidences of classroom disruption and bullying. The introduction of the new behaviour policy is having a positive effect, is welcomed by students but is not yet consistently applied. Students say they feel safe in school and this view is endorsed strongly by parents and carers.

Leaders demonstrate good capacity to drive the school forward through their determination and ambition, a track record of rising standards, and the significant impact of the curriculum, the arts specialism and local partnerships. Target setting is increasing the level of challenge and raising the expectations of teachers and students. Leaders have a broadly accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement although there is a tendency to be overgenerous in judging some aspects, such as overall teaching quality. Priorities are clear and appropriate in that they reflect the school's ambitions but are not underpinned well enough by plans to track, measure and evaluate progress. This is a particular problem in the school's plans to promote equal opportunities. Leaders are beginning to make better use of the good practice that exists in teaching and leadership. Monitoring information from lessons is used increasingly to provide effective intervention and support.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of students to gain high grade passes in English and mathematics, and reduce the variation in standards between subjects and groups of learners through:
 - improvement plans that set out precise objectives with clear measures to check progress
 - regular monitoring and analysis of progress information for cohorts and groups of learners
 - rigorous lesson observation supported by personalised training and support.
- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching through:
 - consistent use of assessment and prior learning information to plan and deliver varied and engaging tasks to meet students' specific learning needs
 - more regular checks on students' understanding during lessons so plans can be adjusted, as necessary
 - more opportunities for teachers to share best practice
 - staff training in meeting the specific needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language
 - consistent use of the behaviour policy and follow up from monitoring information.
- Ensure that identified priorities for promoting equality of opportunity are explicit in improvement plans so that:

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- all members of the school community can contribute to plans and agreed actions
 - progress can be reviewed regularly and reported
 - achievements can be celebrated and priorities refined.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Attainment on entry to the school is rising to provide an ability profile close to the national average for cohorts in Key Stage 3. Older students entered with standards just below average. Standards are broadly average when all subjects are taken into account by the end of Year 11. Leaders recognise that this disguises some variation across subjects and groups of learners linked to the quality of teaching. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language achieve in line with national expectations in relation to their starting points and capabilities. They make good progress in their confidence and interpersonal skills because they feel well supported, especially in the personalised learning centre where intervention is well targeted to meet their needs. Learning in mainstream lessons is more variable because the tracking and evaluation of academic progress for students with different learning needs is limited.

In most lessons, students work well together and with their teachers. They respond enthusiastically when learning opportunities take account of prior learning and promote their personal development. This was the case in a Year 7 English lesson when students responded well to the sharp and snappy interaction that created interest and a good pace. The teacher created opportunities for regular involvement to capture students' views and used questions well to probe their thinking. This stimulated the students to ask searching questions of the teacher as he played the role of a book 'character' and extended their understanding. In the satisfactory lessons, the learning tasks did not meet the needs of learners sufficiently well. Learning is not checked enough to identify students who need further explanation or consolidation before moving on to the next task.

Students are aware of the need to eat healthily and to take regular exercise. This is demonstrated by the popularity of after-school sporting activities and the increase in students choosing healthy school meals. Students have a strong awareness of cultural diversity, both in the school and local community. Students' spiritual development is well supported through assemblies, religious education and the arts. Students organise fundraising for a range of charities, support a recycling project and work with a local special school as part of an enterprise project. The school has been very successful instilling moral values and students usually support each other well. Although the school functions as a harmonious community, a small minority of students do not consistently meet the school's high expectations. Attendance has risen to above average.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, students are motivated by highly interactive teaching and learning supported by a range of engaging and challenging tasks, and frequent checks on their understanding. These lessons are also characterised by good quality relationships and opportunities to work in a range of groupings. Students become active and confident learners when teachers use effective questioning to extend their thinking, and to maximise their participation. Where learning slows, it is usually because the lessons lack precision in planning for the range of ability or to meet students' complex needs. Individual education plans are available with targets to support personal and academic progress but not used routinely in teachers' planning. The management of behaviour is a strength in most classrooms, but this is not consistent.

The innovative curriculum is extended by the schools' virtual learning environment (VLE) with online resources to greatly enrich students' experiences and consolidate their learning. Special programmes, such as the integrated enterprise curriculum in Year 7 and Innov8 in Year 8, have a strong focus on the skills and experiences students need for learning, creativity and teamwork. Older learners choose from a wide range of academic and vocational subjects that meet their needs and interests extremely well. An extremely wide programme of activities, visits and experiences are embedded within the curriculum to deliver the Queensbridge Promise. This ensures that all students take part in a wide

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range of experiences such as residential events, cultural visits and performances, in addition to extensive opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Strengths in the quality of care are underpinned by the school's knowledge of students and their personal needs. The personalised learning centre is highly valued by students as a place for information, advice and guidance and as a drop-in centre. A dedicated team of support staff provides high quality care, and works closely with parents, carers and families to remove barriers to success. This is shown in improved attendance figures and the very low number of persistent absentees. The school works well with a range of outside agencies to support vulnerable students and their families. A comprehensive programme of personal, health and social education is supported by visiting experts.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has a strong understanding of the diverse community the school serves and the challenges and opportunities it presents. Outstanding work to promote community cohesion has a positive impact on students' understanding of the wider world and their role as global citizens. This is shown in friendly and respectful relationships between students, and with staff in the vast majority of cases. Staff share a commitment to improve the life chances of young people. They understand the need to balance academic support with encouragement to build self-confidence and to raise aspirations. Safeguarding procedures are good. A high priority is set for training to ensure that all staff are aware of their responsibilities to promote students' welfare.

Senior leaders and the governing body are hugely ambitious for the school. Priorities are identified and initiatives launched to support improvement, such as in the quality of teaching. Planning and evaluation are less well developed at senior and middle leader level to enable leaders to systematically measure the impact of actions against clear success criteria. The governing body contributes satisfactorily to the school's development. Reports to governors are not sufficiently detailed, particularly about the attainment and progress of groups of learners. This limits the impact of the school's work on promoting equality. The gathering of first-hand evidence by governors through systematic links with departments, staff, students and parents is not effectively in place to contribute to self-evaluation.

Despite strengths in promoting and valuing diversity, and the inclusive ethos that pervades, equality priorities are not supported by carefully constructed plans that involve the whole school community. Students have the opportunity to discuss and debate most forms of harassment but this does not extend to homophobic bullying or the use of

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homophobic language. Leaders recognise that not enough has been done to reduce the variation in students' learning experiences across subjects and lessons.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The number of responses from parents and carers was well above average for a secondary school. A very large majority of parents and carers reported very favourably on their children's experiences in school, the extent to which they are cared for, and the inclusive and diverse nature of the school. Although there is a positive response on most questions, a small minority felt that incidences of unacceptable behaviour and bullying were not always well managed, and that account was not taken of their suggestions and concerns. Comments acknowledged that the new behaviour policy has been helpful but is not yet fully effective. The school's leaders recognise that there is further work to do to embed the policy securely across the school. A few parents and carers did comment positively on how well the school had responded to their individual concerns about bullying incidents, and praised the work of the personalised learning centre team. A few parents and carers report that the school does not help them to support their children's learning. Inspectors noted that the VLE was well received by students in helping them to consolidate and extend their learning at home. This is supplemented by progress and information evenings to provide personal support and guidance. Inspectors judged that there was good engagement with parents and carers, supported by an open parents' and carers' forum to discuss aspects of the school's work.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Queensbridge School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 320 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 671 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	121	38	183	57	9	3	5	2
The school keeps my child safe	119	37	192	60	6	2	2	1
My school informs me about my child's progress	123	38	173	54	18	6	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	114	36	177	55	20	6	5	2
The teaching is good at this school	110	34	186	58	14	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	87	27	183	57	37	12	5	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	83	26	195	61	31	10	3	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	113	35	170	53	18	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	86	27	202	63	20	6	5	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	100	31	172	54	30	9	9	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	74	23	185	58	36	11	7	2
The school is led and managed effectively	103	32	191	60	13	4	3	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	142	44	157	49	14	4	5	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



28 January 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of Queensbridge School, Birmingham, B13 8QB

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited recently. Queensbridge is a satisfactory and improving school with significant strengths. Queensbridge is a friendly place with many diverse groups that help you to appreciate different cultures and beliefs. Staff know you very well; you are pleased about the care and support you receive, especially from the personalised learning centre. You told us that you feel safe, although a few students said that some incidences of bullying and classroom disruption were a concern. You welcomed the new behaviour policy but it is not yet working consistently across the school. The arts specialism is a success and provides experiences that help to boost your confidence and performance skills in dance, music and drama. There are excellent opportunities for you to contribute to the community through leadership roles.

Standards have been rising in recent years, and Year 11 students have made better progress, but there is variation between subjects and different groups of learners. Improvement has been supported by an impressive range of courses. The quality of learning in lessons is too variable. In the best lessons, you make good progress because the teacher includes tasks that interest you and match your learning needs. In these lessons, you are encouraged to get involved and discuss your learning, and the teacher asks questions to check that you understand the work. In other lessons, the work is not pitched so well, some students find it easy, and others too hard.

At the end of the inspection, we identified some improvement points.

To increase the proportion of students who gain high grade GCSE passes in both English and mathematics, and reduce the variation in standards between subject and different groups of students.

To make further improvement to teaching so lessons always help you to make good progress, and to behave well.

To involve the whole school community in identifying priorities for promoting equality of opportunity, with clear action plans so that progress can be carefully tracked.

The school's leaders and staff are working extremely hard to make improvements. You can play your part in the next phase of the school's development by working hard to achieve your learning targets, and supporting the new behaviour policy.

Our best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic

Her Majesty's Inspector

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