

Queensbury School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103616
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	355410
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	252
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	48
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penny Wagg
Headteacher	Veronica Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	18 September 2007
School address	Wood End Road Birmingham B24 8BL
Telephone number	0121 373 5731
Fax number	0121 382 6147
Email address	enquiry@queensbury.bham.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons and saw 18 different teachers. The school's leaders joined inspectors for four lesson observations. Meetings were held with the school's leaders, members of the governing body, learning mentors and students. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of policies, planning, records, minutes of governing body meetings and data about students' performance. They examined all documentation associated with the school's arrangements for keeping students safe. Inspectors scrutinised 46 completed questionnaires returned by parents and carers, over 150 completed by students and 31 returned by staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- Whether the school is able to demonstrate, through its analysis of students' progress from their starting points, that rates of progress compare favourably with national data?
- Have improvements in the provision for students with autism and those with behavioural, social and emotional difficulties been successful in improving the outcomes for these groups?
- How effectively assistant headteachers contribute to school improvement through their monitoring, evaluation and arrangements for holding staff to account?
- Whether the school has suitable plans to adapt the sixth form provision to meet the needs of more academically able students?

Information about the school

Queensbury is large compared to most special schools; it serves the north-east area of Birmingham. All students have a statement of special educational needs; most of these reflect a complex combination of needs, including moderate learning difficulties, autism and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Over 80% of students have speech, language and communication difficulties. The majority of students are of White British origin. The proportion from minority ethnic groups is well above that found in schools nationally, and a quarter of students speak English as an additional language. A very high proportion of students is known to be eligible for free school meals. There are twice as many boys as girls.

Since the last inspection, there has been a change of headteacher. There have also been changes in the membership of the governing body and a significant re-organisation of staff roles and responsibilities, including the leadership team. Further changes are due to take place as the result of staff retiring. The school has successfully secured approval from the local authority to expand its sixth form and building work is underway. This started as a planned refurbishment, but was delayed following the discovery of asbestos, resulting in some students being taught off site until this half-term. The school achieved the Investors in People award in 1996 and the Healthy Schools Award in 2008.

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****3**

Main findings

Queensbury School's effectiveness is satisfactory. Although it is an improving school, as there has been significant development since the current headteacher arrived, this has not yet become well established enough for outcomes to be good. Actions taken to improve students' behaviour, reduce exclusions and raise attendance have been particularly successful. These have made the school a calmer environment where the majority of students feel safe, attend regularly and enjoy their learning. There is also a growing proportion of teaching that is good or better, and some examples of very strong practice emerging, particularly in teaching students with autism. However, teaching is inconsistent, so it is satisfactory rather than good. Although there are no weaknesses common to all the lessons that are less than good, inspectors found instances of a lack of challenge, slow pace, ineffective use of teaching assistants, low expectations and unsuccessful management of students. There is some excellent practice in ensuring that students know what they need to do to improve, but also lessons where students are not all clear about this. As a result of these weaknesses, learning and progress vary from lesson to lesson and are satisfactory rather than good. Leaders have started to share the school's best practice among staff, but this is at an early stage of development.

Although there are some strengths of the curriculum, and provision for students with autism has improved significantly since the last inspection, the school's accommodation is not well matched to the ages and needs of the students. In several ways it limits the school's ability to provide a wider range of learning experiences and secure better outcomes for students. Senior leaders and the governing body are vigorously pursuing ways of addressing the difficulty, but the school does not have sufficient capital funding to secure the necessary improvements itself.

There is a satisfactory capacity to improve further. Senior leaders have demonstrated the ability to lead and secure significant improvements. Recently appointed assistant headteachers have a thorough understanding of their roles. They carry out a suitable range of monitoring and evaluation activities, and hold staff to account through the performance management process. Leaders use a wide range of data to evaluate the performance and participation of different groups in the school, as well as seeking the views of parents and students. Self-evaluation is used effectively to identify the right priorities for improvement, and action plans support developments well enough, although they do not contain enough measurable targets to assist in evaluating the success of actions taken. There are suitable plans for key staff who are leaving to hand over to others who will take their place. However, although work is already under way and there are informal plans for developing the sixth form provision to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of higher attaining students, written planning is not yet in place. This compromises continuity as there is an anticipated temporary change of leadership in the sixth form in January 2011. Governance is satisfactory. Recently, staffing matters with

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implications for the budget have occupied much of the governing body's working time, and it has rightly prioritised those areas of its work that ensures that statutory requirements are met. As a result, it is not fully involved in the processes of school improvement planning or self-evaluation.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that in every lesson:
 - all students are set tasks that provide them with a suitable challenge
 - adults are deployed well to support students' learning
 - a good pace of learning is maintained
 - adults communicate high expectations of work rate and behaviour
 - adults are effective in managing occasional instances of poor behaviour in the classroom
 - all students are clear about what they need to do to improve
 - effective practice in the school is shared with all staff.
- Strengthen the school's capacity to improve by:
 - ensuring that governing body is fully and systematically involved in the processes of school development planning and self-evaluation
 - including measurable outcomes in the school's improvement plan
 - completing plans by December 2010 to show how the school will extend sixth form provision to more effectively meet the needs of higher attaining students in the sixth form.
- Liaise with the local authority to improve the accommodation so that weaknesses identified in this report are rectified.
- 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

The great majority of students enter the school with very low levels of attainment because of the extent and nature of their learning difficulties, in particular difficulties in communication and literacy skills. They make satisfactory gains from their starting points and achieve a range of accreditation by the end of Year 11, including Entry Level and GCSE passes. Their enjoyment and achievement is satisfactory. The school's data show that the best progress is made in information and communication technology (ICT); all students entered for GCSE this year achieved a double award in this subject. Achievement in art is also good and students' art work on display around the school testifies to high standards in this subject. Students in the sixth form improve satisfactorily their functional literacy and numeracy skills, as well as acquiring independence skills.

Inspection evidence of current learning and progress indicates that progress is satisfactory rather than good. Inconsistencies in teaching result in variations in learning and progress

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across the school. However, this does not result in any single group, including those with different special educational needs, doing any better or worse than another. The school can identify through its data ways in which its actions have improved the outcomes for girls and for students who speak English as an additional language.

In the great majority of lessons, students are well motivated, keen to answer questions and respond well to the adults supporting them. They are particularly well engaged when using ICT to support their learning, and they work well independently in such situations. Students work well enough in pairs and in teams, but occasionally individuals are reluctant to complete the work set and need considerable encouragement. During practical activities, some show great perseverance in tasks that they find hard, because of a physical difficulty for instance. Students particularly enjoy lessons where it is crystal clear what they need to do to improve and adults give regular oral and written feedback on their successes, because this adds to students' sense of achievement.

Students use equipment safely and sensibly. However, they do not always behave sensibly, sometimes running in narrow corridors, for instance. Those who find it difficult to behave well all the time improve their ability to modify their behaviour so that it is socially acceptable. Reports on students' work experience shows that they are well behaved when in the workplace. Although a few students report that there is still some bullying, particularly name calling, instances of violence have reduced and are now rare. Attendance has improved but pupils are occasionally late at the start of lessons.

Students take part in a good range of physical activities, including sporting events, but do not always make healthy choices in the food and drink they bring into school. They express their views through the school council, which also helps to plan school events. They raise funds for charities of their choice, including through enterprise activities, but there are few opportunities for students to take responsibility as individuals, especially for their own learning. Students have a secure awareness of issues such as racism and the school is a cohesive community where racist incidents are uncommon. By the time students leave the school, they are satisfactorily prepared for the next step and all go on to a meaningful and appropriate placement, most choosing to continue their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

* In some special schools inspectors do not make a judgement about attainment in relation to expectations of the pupils' age.

How effective is the provision?

Although school leaders have taken suitable action to improve teaching and learning, there are remaining inconsistencies. In general, staff have secure expertise in their subjects and in teaching students with learning difficulties. Action taken by leaders has ensured that assessment is now regular, frequent and accurate. Lessons are planned to a common format and identify clear learning objectives, which are shared with students. In the most successful lessons, planning shows exactly where students of different abilities are starting from, what they are aiming for and what they need to do to progress towards this target. This is shared with students and reviewed throughout the lesson or at the end. However, planning is not always of this high quality and there are occasions when starting points are not sufficiently taken into account so that tasks are too easy for a few. Similarly, not all teachers ensure that students are clear about what to do to improve as they do not involve them well enough in assessing their own work. Most lessons proceed at a good pace, but occasionally additional adults are not used effectively to divide classes into smaller groups so that students' participation is maximised. Staff implement well enough the school's behaviour management systems, but not all are equally good at managing instances of difficult behaviour or reluctance to work. On occasions,

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expectations are not high enough. In general, adults have good working relationships with students and encourage them well.

Provision is tailored adequately to meet the diverse needs of students. The addition of a lunchtime 'club' for those who prefer a quiet place to eat, as well as one for students with autism, help students to cope with this part of the day. Activities such as emotional literacy, circle time and social stories help students to understand themselves and others, and build relationships. However, the lack of small rooms where individuals or groups can work away from the main classes limits the school's ability to provide this sort of intervention. The introduction of lunchtime games in the playground has helped to improve behaviour. The lack of facilities, such as a sports hall and associated changing rooms, limits access to physical activity indoors as well as opportunities for students to establish personal hygiene routines. The school does its best with the limited space that it has, and makes up for shortfalls through links with other schools and by using local facilities. The curriculum is well enriched by opportunities such as after-school clubs, visiting theatre groups, trips to the pantomime and residential school journeys. Students also take part in a good range of competitive sports activities. Older students take part in suitable work experience, enterprise activities and vocational learning.

The work done by learning mentors is a particular strength and very much appreciated by parents and carers. It has had a significant impact on the behaviour, attendance and well-being of some particularly vulnerable students. Arrangements to keep students safe are satisfactory. The school has added a toilet for disabled people but there are too few toilets for girls. A robust approach to sanctioning holidays during term time has helped to improve attendance. There is timely support from Connexions, as well as suitable parental involvement, to help guide students in making decisions about their futures.

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	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	3

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future of the school, including ambitious plans to develop a 'Learning Village' in partnership with a local secondary school. Most staff are in favour of the developments that have taken place, and recognise that these were necessary. Senior staff are skilled, enthusiastic and ready to tackle remaining weaknesses. For instance, assistant headteachers have a clear grasp of what constitutes good teaching and learning. All staff now contribute to the development of planning, monitoring of action plans and reviewing the action taken. All staff have targets set as part of performance management, although these are not linked to measurable whole-school targets in the improvement plan.

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The governing body is effective in ensuring that statutory requirements are met. The governor responsible for safeguarding has recently taken on this role and has a clear understanding of the issues and the need to keep this aspect of the school's work under constant review. A governor responsible for health and safety has visited to do a 'walk-round' with the site manager and identify areas for improvement. Similarly, governors on the curriculum committee visit school to check on aspects of its work and they receive reports from subject leaders as well as the headteacher. The full governing body considers a wide range of data to check on the performance of the school, and its members ask pertinent questions. Although the governing body checks on the progress of the school's development plan, they are not fully involved in the relatively new process that has been introduced.

A clear analysis of the school's context has been carried out as part of the school's drive to secure equality of opportunity. The performance and participation of groups are analysed and suitable action taken to ensure that all are doing equally well. Students have a sound range of opportunities to learn about their place in the school, local and national communities. The school is inclusive in its approach, reaching out to share its expertise with others. Its facilities are regularly made available for car boot sales in the local community. Plans formally recognise the need to develop further its international links, including one with a school in Mumbai. However, no formal evaluation has yet been undertaken of the impact of actions taken recently to encourage greater community cohesion.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Sixth form

The sixth form offers a satisfactory range of opportunities for students to develop their academic and personal skills. The accreditation provided meets students' needs, and links

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with local schools and colleges are used effectively to broaden the range on offer. Students develop their independence skills by learning to apply basic skills in social contexts, as well as learning to travel independently. Most reach the challenging targets that are set for them. Where they do not, the school can account for this. Students contribute to the school and local communities by running enterprise activities, such as car valeting, to raise funds for charities. There are sound opportunities for students to develop their physical and leisure skills. A purpose-built kitchen is available for them to learn to prepare healthy meals. Suitable guidance and support helps students to decide on future destinations and almost all go on to further education when they leave.

The breadth of provision is presently curtailed by the lack of access to facilities that will be available once the building work is completed. For instance, during the inspection a students' common room was being used as a classroom, and the hair and beauty workstation was not accessible. Once completed, the accommodation will offer more space and improved facilities than those previously available. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Monitoring and evaluation have identified areas that need to be tackled and suitable action has led to improvements, such as ensuring that independent working is maximised. Although work has begun to increase the range of courses leading to accreditation at a higher level, such as foundation learning, there is currently no written plan showing how this is to be built upon in the future.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	3
The quality of provision in the sixth form	3
Leadership and management of the sixth form	3

Views of parents and carers

In a relatively low return of completed questionnaires, parents and carers showed that they are mostly satisfied with what the school provides. The responses were similar to those received when the school sent out a questionnaire a year ago. Several showed strong satisfaction with the work done by learning mentors to help students who experience particular difficulties. The school has increased opportunities for parents and carers to discuss students' progress as a result of feedback from questionnaires, but a small number still feel that there should be more formal opportunities to discuss progress, even though the school has an 'open door' policy and invites parents to make arrangements to come in if they would like to. A few parents and carers added comments saying how pleased they were with the progress their children are making; others said the opposite. A few expressed concerns about behaviour and bullying. Inspectors investigated parents' and carers' concerns and found that there is still occasional poor behaviour and some instances of bullying, mainly name calling.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Queensbury 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 46 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 252 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	20	43	23	50	2	4	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	19	41	26	57	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	18	39	21	46	5	11	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	15	33	24	52	5	11	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	20	43	25	54	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	18	39	21	46	6	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	19	41	22	48	3	7	0	0
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)	18	39	25	54	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	16	35	24	52	4	9	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	21	46	22	48	0	0	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	14	30	27	59	2	4	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	18	39	25	54	1	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	18	39	19	41	4	9	0	0

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 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. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

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.



10 November 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Queensbury School, Birmingham, B24 8BL

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited and for completing questionnaires telling us what you think about the school. We were pleased to be able to see you at work and talk to some of you about life at school.

We decided that your school is satisfactory. There are some good things and some areas that need to improve. There have been recent improvements in your behaviour and attendance. You are making satisfactory progress in your work, and are doing well in art and information and communication technology (ICT). Most of you feel safe but a few say that there is some bullying. You know what you need to do to be fit and healthy and take a lot of exercise at school, but you do not always make healthy choices of food and drink that you bring to school. The school council makes sure that your views are heard and some of you have helped with improvements, such as designing the playground markings. You also raise money for others who are less fortunate than you. You are prepared properly for leaving school and have examination passes that help you to continue learning at college. Most of your parents and carers are happy with the school and so are you. Most of you told us that you enjoy coming to school.

The headteacher, governors and staff have agreed to work on three main things.

They are going to make sure that every lesson is a good one.

They will improve their plan for improvement and check on how well changes help you to learn and develop.

They are going to work with the people in charge of schools in Birmingham to improve the school's buildings.

You can help by attending regularly, working hard and making sure that you behave as well as you possibly can.

Yours sincerely

Sue Aldridge

Lead inspector

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