

# Queen's Croft High School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	124521
<b>Local Authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	359688
<b>Inspection dates</b>	13–14 June 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Alan Dobbins

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Community special
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	161
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	27
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Nick Moseley
<b>Headteacher</b>	John Edwards
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	29 November 2007
<b>School address</b>	Birmingham Road Lichfield WS13 6PJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01543 510669
<b>Fax number</b>	01543 510673
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed, in part or in full, 18 lessons and all of the classroom teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff, groups of students and the local authority link advisor. Inspectors looked at policies and reviewed documents and the data the school has on students' progress. They scrutinised 55 parental questionnaires and spoke with four parents.

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

- How well does the school judge the progress of students in comparison with that of equivalent students in similar schools?
- How effective are teachers and their assistants in meeting the learning needs of all students, especially those with limited communication skills and those who attain at the highest levels?
- How well does the curriculum match students' learning needs and interests?
- How effective is the sixth form in preparing students for the next stage of their education and their life after school?
- How good are senior leaders in improving the school?

## Information about the school

This school was re-organised in 2006 from an all-age school for pupils and students with moderate learning difficulties to a generic secondary school. It caters for students with profound and severe and moderate learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with difficulties with vision and hearing. Increasingly, students are entering the school with more complex difficulties that include autistic spectrum disorders, medical conditions and challenging behaviour. It is a larger than average special school and all students have a statement of special educational needs. Most are of White British heritage. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is greater than the average. There are twice as many boys as girls. Since the last inspection, the school has gained specialist status for Communication and Interaction.

**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?**

**1**

**The school's capacity for sustained improvement**

**1**

## Main findings

Queen's Croft High School is an outstanding school. Since re-organisation, development in all aspects of the school has been considerable. Students and their parents and carers say that they are proud to be associated with Queen's Croft. One parental comment reflected the feelings of almost all when she wrote, 'What a wonderful school, perfect in every way.'

The school is a happy, safe, calm and well-ordered place characterised by the outstanding relationships between students and staff. In a compassionate but expecting environment students prosper as learners and as growing young people. Those in Years 7 to 11 make outstanding progress in gaining the skills of communication, literacy and number when compared with the progress of equivalent students in similar schools nationally. And the rate of progress is continuing to improve. Over each of the last three years, students in Years 10 and 11 have achieved better grades over a wider range of accredited awards than hitherto. Sixth form students follow individual programmes for learning based on their capabilities and interests. Their grades confirm their good preparation for their next challenge, which for most will be following courses of their choice in local colleges of further education. Students learn what is right for them and their outstanding progress is a consequence of the high quality work of their teachers and teaching assistants.

Specialist support staff deal very effectively with a wide range of additional difficulties, for example in helping students take greater control of their behaviour or in meeting specific visual needs, so that they can be more effective in attending to their learning. Gaining specialist status for Communication and Interaction allows expert additional help to be made available to one third of students.

Students have fully embraced their roles as learners. By behaving outstandingly well in lessons and routinely working hard to do their best they make an important contribution to their learning. They say they like school very much and this shows in their good attendance and in the way they take a full part in all the school offers, including the lunchtime clubs and the residential visits. They are well aware of the importance of making healthy choices and of being safe at all times. Over time they gain a secure understanding of right and wrong. Spiritual values are developed well through learning to trust and respect the staff and by gaining friends as they move through the school.

The headteacher, very well supported by his senior leaders, initiates and manages developments outstandingly well. Since the last inspection there has been significant improvement, for example in students' progress, the quality of teaching and the range and relevance of the learning experiences available to them. These and other developments show the capacity for sustaining improvement to be outstanding. Effective school self-evaluation procedures allow the headteacher, his team and the governors to know the school very well, including having a detailed knowledge of the progress of individual students against their targets. Their procedures for judging the quality of students'

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progress against equivalent students in similar schools are not as well developed. Consequently, the senior leaders have some difficulty in accurately benchmarking the outstanding progress of their students against others nationally.

## **What does the school need to do to improve further?**

- Put in place procedures that accurately judge the progress students make against equivalent students in similar schools nationally.

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

**1**

The effect of their special educational needs limits the levels at which students are able to attain. Most enter the school with levels well below those expected for their age. In a caring and secure environment all students, including the minority of girls and those with the most complex needs who have the greatest difficulty in relating their thoughts and feelings, prosper as learners and as young people in growing to be as independent as possible.

Lessons are enjoyable events because students have good relationships with their teachers and the assistants, and this helps them feel comfortable and confident as learners. They often have fun when learning. For example, in an outstanding lesson which focused on the collection and use of data bases to further the sales of large retail organisations, all in the lesson worked animatedly with a clear focus on creating their own protocol for collecting relevant personal information. Then they had great fun in characterising the lifestyle and values of someone from information held in her weekly shopping list. The lesson was memorable because of the teacher's high expectations for learning and by the respect students showed for the thoughts and opinions of their friends.

The most striking example of students' outstanding progress is the average points scored by students on the nationally accredited awards that they take in Years 10 and 11. Since the last inspection, the average points score has risen steadily each year from 46.8 in 2007 to 71.8 for last year (2010). This score places the school in the highest echelon of similar schools in the country, and the predicted average points score for this year (2011) is higher again at 85 points. Progress in mathematics and science is slightly better than in the aspects of English but evidence, showing the impact of the additional opportunities afforded many students through specialist status, indicates that English is quickly catching up.

The emphasis on raising awareness of the importance of staying healthy is reflected in the change to the lunchtime menus, which are now made up, predominantly, of healthy foods. The lunchtime activities, which require students to be active, such as the bike and dodge ball clubs, have a high take up. They are proud to take responsibility as members of the school council and especially proud of the way the school supports others in the locality, for example through charitable contributions for local cancer relief and by helping older people tend their lawns. A clear awareness of the needs of the local community is gained through regular visits to local places, such as the shops and parks, in support of learning and, for the older students, through the work experience placements. Raising awareness of different cultures and beliefs is mostly through the curriculum, supported by special focus days, some of which include students sampling food from different cultures. Their considerable gains in self-confidence and self-esteem, which have their origins in the

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outstanding relationships they have with staff, promote a clear understanding of spiritual issues, such as the importance of truth, trust, respect and friendship.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

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

<sup>1</sup> 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?

Teaching is better than at the last inspection. Most of the lessons seen by inspectors were judged to be outstanding. This improvement not only reflects well on the leadership and management of teaching but also on the teachers and their assistants, as it has happened over a time when a greater proportion of students with increasingly complex needs have joined the school. Teachers and their assistants have risen to this challenge by increasing their skills repertoire.

The curriculum has also improved since the last inspection. The array of nationally accredited awards has broadened substantially. The range is from full GCSE in a small number of subjects for the highest attaining students to foundation learning awards for those with the severest of learning difficulties. Irrespective of their capability, all students are able to demonstrate the full extent of their learning over their time in Years 7 to 11. The curriculum is personalised to meet their primary needs through individual education plans and this works very well. As a result, each student gains a coherent and relevant

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curriculum that contributes significantly to their outstanding progress. The many opportunities they have to take part in visits, for example the annual visit to the Houses of Parliament or the ski trip to Italy, make a very valuable contribution to promoting self-confidence and to practising the skills of independence. Gaining specialist status for Communication and Interaction places the school at the forefront of innovative support for those with difficulties in communication.

The care and support of students permeates every aspect of the school. They, and their parents and carers, see this as the school's strength. One parental comment stated that since joining the school her child has, '... become much more confident and positive and has improved immensely. It is a great feeling to see my child becoming happier at school.' The outstanding progress made in learning is testament to the high quality of the teaching staff, but additional needs are met equally well. Through the effective work of the nurse and other specialists, such as the vision impairment teacher, physiotherapists and the speech therapists, students gain increasing access to their learning and to all the school offers. The transition links into the school and from Year 11 to the sixth form or to local colleges of further education work very well. Provision for students as outlined in their statements of educational needs is met in full.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are leadership and management?

Since re-organisation the headteacher has led the team of senior leaders exceptionally well in developing the school, including driving up progress. Following his lead, staff are committed to providing only the very best of opportunities so that students can flourish both as learners and as developing young people. Governors make an outstanding contribution to ensuring the programme for improvement is continuous. They are extremely well organised and, through their frequent visits and their reporting procedures, they know the school very well. They are wholly effective in ensuring students are safe at school and in seeing that no student is discriminated against in any way.

Systematic self-evaluation has been central in guiding senior leaders and governors in their work. Improvements in progress and in the quality of teaching are the two most obvious examples that show that the school's self-evaluation procedures have worked very well. They are sufficiently rigorous and comprehensive to continue to support the drive for further improvement. Nevertheless, there is too little focus on using national guidelines and emerging data bases to judge the quality of students' progress against equivalent students in similar schools nationally. This means that the senior leaders and governors do not have a comparably sharp enough picture of how well their students are doing.

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Due regard has been paid to community cohesion. The outstanding relationships between staff and students underpin the cohesiveness of the school community. It is a lovely place to learn and to work. Students gain a very good knowledge of their local community through many well-established links, including that with the diocese of the local cathedral, regular visits in the locality and through the link with the Rotary Club. National awareness is gained through visits to London and through the residential trips. International links are being extended through the emerging link with a school in Ethiopia. The impact of partners with the school is clearly seen in the outstanding progress students make in their learning. The very effective work of personnel from many agencies contributes to all students gaining full access to the school's provision, irrespective of the extent or complexity of their learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Those who organise the work placements make a worthwhile addition to the school based curriculum by giving students valuable first-hand experience of business and commerce. Safeguarding procedures are outstanding.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

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

**Sixth form**

The sixth form is developing well because of outstanding leadership and management. Teaching is improving. It is most often good but is increasingly outstanding. Curriculum opportunities are broadening, and individualising the curriculum for each student makes their learning experiences relevant and interesting. As a consequence, students make good progress in their learning and in preparation for the next stage of their education and their life thereafter. Some opportunities are provided to gain vocational experience and qualifications, notably in horticulture. Generally, however, there are too few opportunities to learn vocational skills or gain taster experiences in more adult environments, such as those of colleges and training providers.



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*These are the grades for the sixth form*

<b>Overall effectiveness of the sixth form</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Views of parents and carers

'This is an excellent school. My daughter's confidence and ability have soared since she has been there'. This one parental comment reflects the feelings of many who returned the questionnaire or who talked to an inspector. Almost all parents and carers are enthusiastic supporters of the school. They report that it is well led and managed. They are especially pleased that their children enjoy being at school and feel safe there. They like the emphasis on healthy living. They are almost uniform in saying that their children are being prepared as well as possible for the next stage of their education and their future lives. A small minority wish to gain more help in supporting their children's learning at home. Inspectors looked at this and judged that parents and carers have many opportunities to request specific help, if required, in continuing the work of the school in the home. Inspectors endorse the very positive views the great majority of parents and carers hold for the work of the school.

## Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Queen's Croft High 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 55 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 160 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	58	21	38	0	0	2	4
The school keeps my child safe	38	69	15	27	0	0	1	2
My school informs me about my child's progress	30	55	21	38	2	4	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	58	19	35	2	4	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	38	69	13	24	3	5	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	28	51	21	38	4	7	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	31	56	22	40	1	2	1	2
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)	28	54	23	44	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	35	64	17	31	2	4	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	33	61	17	31	1	2	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	31	56	20	36	3	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	37	67	15	27	1	2	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	39	71	13	24	2	4	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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"><li>■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.</li><li>■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.</li><li>■ The quality of teaching.</li><li>■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.</li><li>■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.</li></ul>
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.**



15 June 2011

Dear Students

**Inspection of Queen's Croft High School, Lichfield, WS13 6PJ**

It was a pleasure for me and my colleagues to meet and spend time with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found your school to be an outstanding school. These are some of the things we especially liked.

The outstanding progress you make in your learning and in developing as independent young people.

The outstanding way you behave and the way you work hard in your lessons.

That you feel very safe and are happy at school.

That you are learning what is right for you so that when you leave you are prepared well for the next stage of your education.

The outstanding teaching and the way in which the others who work at the school help you in your learning and in growing up.

The way in which your headteacher, the other leaders and governors work to keep improving the school, especially in gaining specialist school status in Communication and Interaction so as to provide additional help for those of you who need it.

There is only one thing that we would like done better. Your leaders and the governors need to improve the way they check on how well you are doing in your learning against other students in similar schools. This is a good way of showing just how hard you work and how good the school is at helping you learn. You can help by always behaving as well, and by working as hard as you did, in the lessons that my colleagues and I visited.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead Inspector

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