

# Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	120707
<b>Local Authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	380093
<b>Inspection dates</b>	2–3 November 2011
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Miller

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>	Grammar (selective)
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	858
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	264
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Bennett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Heather Payne
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	21 January 2009
<b>School address</b>	West Street Horncastle LN9 5AD
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## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. They visited 44 lessons and observed 38 teachers. Inspectors also carried out observations of students' learning across the school. Meetings were held with representatives of the governing body, and teaching and non-teaching staff. Inspectors talked formally with members of the student council and informally with other students. They attended assemblies, daily form-time and registration sessions and looked at students' work. Inspectors examined a wide range of school documents including: policies; development planning; self-evaluation reports; monitoring files; curriculum materials; documents relating to the safeguarding of students and information provided for parents and carers. Inspectors scrutinised minutes of meetings of the governing body including the headteacher's reports to the governing body and various reviews of the school's performance. Inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 430 parents and carers, 68 members of staff and a sample of 126 students.

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

- The work of the school in improving further the students' progress in English, including the ways literacy and communication skills are supported by the work of other curriculum subjects.
- The progress made since the last inspection in ensuring a consistent approach, at all levels of leadership, to the monitoring and quality assurance processes throughout the school, including those for teaching and assessment.
- The ways the school's leaders, at sixth form level, have been working to ensure the progress made by students, and their achievements in Year 11 examinations continue more consistently throughout Years 12 and 13.

## Information about the school

This is a smaller than average-sized school. Entry is by a selection examination at age 11; the school's policy is to accept students from the top 25% ability range nationally. Students with a wider range of ability are admitted to the sixth form. Most pupils are of White British heritage. The percentage of girls attending the school is above the national average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is below average and that for those who speak English as an additional language is well below average. The percentage of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is well below average, but covers a wide range of individual learning needs. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school currently holds an International School Award, a Healthy School Award, an Eco School award and the School Council Silver Award. It is designated as a High Performing Specialist School for science and modern languages.

**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

This is an outstanding school with a good sixth form. It enables its students to achieve high levels in both their personal and academic development. All groups of students, including those few who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make excellent progress between Years 7 and 11. The school has established a track record for enabling its students to attain consistently well above national average standards in GCSE examinations; this includes overall attainment in the school's specialist subjects. Provisional national data for 2011 show this trend continued with 44% of entries gaining A\* and A grades and 78% A\* to B grades.

Attainment on entry to the sixth form is broader than in the main school. About two thirds of sixth form students have continued from Year 11 and the balance join from other local schools. All groups make good progress from their starting points to gain above average standards overall by the end of Year 13. Combined with the continued high quality of the students' personal development in the sixth form, this enables them to gain good success in their university applications and the general pursuit of their chosen careers. However, although there are no patterns identifying a weakness in any specific subject, there are variations in students' achievement year-on-year. This has led to an uneven pattern in terms of the measures the school uses to determine students' success post-16. In order to resolve this, the school is using its new expertise at senior leadership level to extend into the sixth form the more effective performance analysis systems being applied in the main school.

The school's academic record and its resolution of the issues identified at its last inspection help to underpin the school's excellent capacity for improvement. Self-assessment by the school's leaders, from middle leaders through to the governing body, is open and perceptive. In this, there is outstanding leadership from the headteacher, and encouragement for other staff to use their personal and professional skills to the best advantage. The school has an excellent curriculum, but has instituted widespread consultations to ensure it does not lose its edge in the face of contemporary developments in education. It is now looking to ensure that all subjects contribute fully to new national initiatives through the development of students' literacy and communication skills.

Inspectors agree with the school's own self-evaluation that teaching and assessment, and the monitoring of teaching and learning, are good. Improvements since the last inspection in the school's quality assurance systems, and the greater involvement of middle leaders in monitoring lessons and learning, have improved the proportion of

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good and outstanding teaching. The school's Learning and Teaching Group has been influential in the sharing of good practice and ensuring a greater focus on the impact of teaching strategies on students' learning. However, there remain elements of teaching and assessment which are insufficiently consistent across the school. Oral feedback to students is usually very helpful, but marking is sometimes less so in noting how students may improve or in setting them targets for their next steps in learning. Furthermore, some teachers still adopt a lecturing approach which neither involves students sufficiently actively in the learning nor uses questioning effectively to check their understanding during lessons. In such cases students become passive learners, and their progress more limited. Where the teaching involves students fully, their learning and progress take wing, as does their sense of enjoyment in learning.

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

- Strengthen and enhance students' learning, building on good practice by:
  - securing a more consistent approach to the use of assessment in the classroom, particularly through marking and the use of questioning
  - ensuring additional opportunities for students to become involved actively in lessons, in order to challenge and inspire them even further
  - augmenting assessment systems in the sixth form, in order to reduce variations in students' performance between subjects, by extending the sharper approaches being developed in the main school
  - using the school's current review of its curriculum to establish increased opportunities for students to develop and apply their literacy and communication skills across the full range of curriculum subjects.

**Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils****1**

Almost all the students demonstrate excellent attitudes to school life because they appreciate their teachers have much to offer them personally, professionally, and through the school's specialisms. In and around the school site they are ambassadors for exemplary behaviour. Students say they feel totally confident in the effectiveness of the school in helping them overcome any personal problems. Consequently, students are highly motivated and able to develop as individual characters with a strong sense of social and citizenship responsibility. Discussions with students, and their responses to the questionnaire, show the overwhelming majority exhibit highly-effective awareness of risks and dangers, including e-safety and the use of social media. Throughout the inspection there were striking examples of normal everyday opportunities for students to think and reflect on important issues relating to existence, ethics, faith and belief, and many contemporary world issues.

The extent of students' achievement was typified by a Year 10 English lesson on 'To Kill a Mockingbird'. High quality debate between the students and their teacher enabled not only the excellent development of their critical and analytical skills, but also a profound understanding of the book's themes concerning racism and justice. Students showed a deep appreciation of the intellectual, physical and moral courage

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displayed by the characters. The excellent use of student discussion, stimulated by probing questioning, was also seen in a Year 11 lesson where students were preparing for their spoken language study. The students were clearly enjoying their learning and used well the opportunity to assess each other’s work.

*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>	1
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>	1
<b>The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development</b>	<b>1</b>

**How effective is the provision?**

A Year 9 history lesson on the mining industry exemplified students’ achievement through involvement, as well as the highly imaginative use of classroom furniture in dramatic role play. Excellent teaching strategies resulted in memorable learning through the students’ engagement, curiosity and inquisitive questioning. Expert teacher questioning, eliciting extended and evaluative answers from students, was to be seen in a Year 9 textiles lesson on tie-dye techniques. High expectations enabled the excellent development of the students’ ability to work independently. However, such excellence and trust of the students is not entirely consistent across the school. In another Key Stage 3 lesson, the teacher talked at the students practically all the time, and assumed their understanding; this was true for most, but not all. Students in all year groups much appreciate the verbal feedback they receive from their teachers in lessons; this helps them know what and how to improve. However, marking does not always document this regularly or consistently enough, or in detail, to provide a more permanent record to which students may refer when precise memories of the oral feedback may fade.

Students’ excellent personal development is underpinned securely by the outstanding

<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

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care, guidance and support the school provides. Those whose circumstances may make them either temporarily or permanently more vulnerable, mainly due to medical needs, find continued success at the school because support for them is systematic. This approach towards all groups of students ensures a personalised approach which takes into account the challenges and pressures which apply to these young people in a demanding academic environment. The curriculum is enhanced considerably by opportunities for enrichment and the development of collapsed timetable experiences. Here, cross-curriculum approaches have proved successful. Imaginative projects involving English and mathematics enhanced Year 9 investigation work; science, modern languages and information and communication technology have cooperated on fieldwork activities. These provide excellent examples of the way the school's specialist subjects enrich learning. Staff and students alike talk enthusiastically about their work last year on 'Tennyson: The Man'. Here, English, art, drama and media studies collaborated very effectively in the study of this local poet. The school is now working to develop further the ways all subjects may work together to enhance students' literacy and communication skills.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
<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?

There is excellence in the drive for improvement and ambition shown by leaders at all levels. All staff returning their questionnaire indicated they are proud of the school and know what it is trying to achieve. Almost all feel their individual and collective contributions are valued; this leads to the very effective teamwork which underpins the school's drive for continued improvement. Staff are often their own most severe critics; in this they show high expectations of themselves and their students. The monitoring of teaching has been effective, regular and with clear foci for both middle and senior leaders. However, the balance of lesson observations has been weighted more on teaching than learning. The school is now shifting its perspective to ensure the equally rigorous monitoring of learning. Nevertheless, the school's excellent practice and application of the principles of equality of opportunity enables its students the scope to grasp the best chances for their future lives and well-being.

Governors give freely of their time and professional expertise in support of the school. They undertake research on behalf of the school, sometimes visiting others to help inform the key decisions they take. The governing body has been influential in promoting student voice; student representatives attend full governing body meetings and have voting rights on its well-being sub-committee. There is excellent

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practice in the safeguarding of students. School records show highly effective, tenacious action is taken, together with partner agencies, to ensure the students' safety and well-being. There is an excellent focus on safety and safeguarding throughout the curriculum. An excellent approach to community cohesion is seen not only in the development of students' awareness of their responsibilities as future citizens but also in the school's broader partnerships. There has been clear analysis, action planning and review of the impact of the school's role in its community and beyond. Discussions with a partner secondary headteacher confirmed the very positive impact of a number of joint ventures. On the broader stage, the school has facilitated student and staff participation, for example in Project India and World Challenge. The school as a community ensures continuous learning about the world students live in and the ways they may contribute to shaping the future.

*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	2
<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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money</b>	<b>1</b>

## Sixth form

Students make good progress in the sixth form. This is due to mainly good and sometimes outstanding teaching. Almost all sixth form teachers show excellent subject knowledge. However, where teaching and students' progress are simply satisfactory this tends to be due to the more instructional style a few teachers adopt. In some cases, the teachers concerned have grasped the necessity of posing students questions, but these tend to be rhetorical and do not demand a response. Consequently, students learn to be quiet, listen carefully and take helpful notes. However, these are not always checked or marked effectually to ensure students understand fully the key learning and concepts being communicated. Where teaching is outstanding, working relationships are excellent because of the high levels of informed discussion and open debate. As a result, the vast majority of students are clear about their academic targets and are aware of any weaknesses. Such quality



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learning and teaching challenge was seen across a range of subjects including English, mathematics, physics, geography and engineering.

Senior and sixth form leaders are working productively together to ensure consistent provision and outcomes post-16, but there is more to be done to establish outstanding practice. Consequently, for example, students’ private study time is under review and being monitored more closely. Attendance and retention rates are exceptionally high. Students accept willingly their leadership roles and provide excellent role models for younger year groups. Students support the smooth running of the school, taking responsibility through their sixth form committees. Care and support is a high priority for staff. Students say that nothing is too much trouble when they need extra support. Off-site work is subject to the school’s rigorous safeguarding policy. The academic curriculum is a strong feature, which suits the students’ aspirations. Excellent levels of guidance enable students to follow pathways through which they are likely to achieve well. There is a very full programme of enrichment activities on offer to all students, and participation rates are high.

*These are the grades for the sixth form*

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

**Views of parents and carers**

The proportion of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire was well above average. The very large majority are happy with the school and responded positively to all the questions. The vast majority were particularly appreciative of the ways the school keeps its students safe. There was no specific pattern emerging from parents’ and carers’ written comments; for each concern raised there was counterbalancing praise for the school. For those who find the pressures of academic work and homework stressful for their children there were others who stated their children thrived on the challenge. A few parents and carers feel the school does not take their suggestions and concerns into account. Discussions with staff, governors and school records show the school does take very seriously the representations of all its stakeholders. There is currently a major consultation underway regarding the future development of the school’s curriculum; this is a significant opportunity for parents, carers and students to make a contribution to the future development of the school. A few parents and carers feel they are given insufficient guidance as to how to support their child’s learning. This appears linked to the quality and extent of written marking and how this informs students, and their families, as to how they may improve. Overall, the views of most families were summed up by one parent who wrote, ‘We are extremely impressed by the school. There is always a personal approach and an understanding of the individual student and their needs.’

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

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle 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 430 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 860 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	183	43	215	50	21	5	7	2
The school keeps my child safe	221	52	200	47	3	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	162	38	239	56	19	4	1	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	184	43	222	52	15	4	3	1
The teaching is good at this school	197	46	212	50	11	3	2	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	119	28	238	56	60	14	2	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	109	26	275	64	31	7	4	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)	169	40	218	51	16	4	2	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	168	39	219	51	22	5	5	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	144	34	241	56	15	4	3	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	87	20	260	61	32	7	8	2
The school is led and managed effectively	171	40	224	52	11	3	8	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	222	52	185	43	15	4	5	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.**



4 November 2011

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle, LN9 5AD**

We would like to thank you for the very open and friendly welcome you gave to us when we visited your school recently. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you, and appreciated the considered ways by which you helped us to understand your school.

These are some of the things we found are best about your school.

- Your achievement and the progress you make are both outstanding.
- Your behaviour around school and attitudes to learning are excellent.
- Your school gives you excellent opportunity to prepare for your future lives.
- Your personal development is ensuring you are responsible young citizens.
- You make an outstanding contribution to the school and its wider community.
- The care and support you receive from adults at the school is of high quality.
- Your headteacher, other senior teachers and governors lead your school very well indeed; they work purposefully to ensure you receive the best education.

We have asked your headteacher and the other teachers to do certain things to ensure you continue to make excellent progress. They will be developing further the strategies they use to assess your learning and understanding in lessons, particularly through the use of questioning. Those in charge of the sixth form will be monitoring your attainment even more closely to help you reduce any variations in performance between your different subjects. Teachers will also be ensuring you have a written record of the good oral feedback you receive on your work; this is to ensure you are very clear as to how to improve. You will also find all your teachers involving you more actively in lessons, in order to challenge and inspire you further. Finally, all subjects across the school will be working on new initiatives to help you develop further, and apply, your literacy and communication skills across the full range of subjects. This is part of a national initiative involving all schools across the country.

You may take due pride in the contributions you make in ensuring that yours is an outstanding school with a good sixth form. Your school has a long and proud history; your task is to continue that tradition by helping maintain its excellence for learning.

Yours sincerely

Michael Miller  
Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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