

Queen Elizabeth's Academy Trust

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136646
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	382231
Inspection dates	26–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Peter Sanderson HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection of boarding provision was carried out under the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Care Standards Act 2000, having regard to the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1513
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	262
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Demitri Coryton (Acting)
Principal	Richard Newton-Chance
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2009
School address	Western Road Crediton EX17 3LU
Telephone number	01363 773401
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Boarding/ Residential provision	Queen Elizabeth's Boarding
Social care unique reference number	SC022233
Social care inspector	Paula Lahey HMI

Age group	11–18
Inspection date(s)	26–28 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Peter Sanderson	Her Majesty's Inspector
Paula Lahey	Her Majesty's Inspector
Norma Welsby	Social Care Regulatory Inspector
Wendy Delf	Additional Inspector
Sally Hall	Additional Inspector
Marcia Headon	Additional Inspector
David Nebesnuick	Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 37 lessons, taught by 36 teachers. In addition, one inspector made a number of short visits to lessons with the college's special educational needs coordinator to focus specifically on the support for disabled students and those with special educational needs. Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body and college staff, including the Principal, senior and middle leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. They observed the college's work, including scrutinising students' books, and looked at a range of documents, including the college improvement plan, attendance, exclusion and assessment data. They also analysed 301 parental questionnaires as well as those returned from students and staff.

Information about the school

Queen Elizabeth's is a larger than average secondary school. Nearly all students are White British. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below that found in most schools. The college has a specialist resource base which is funded for eight students with statements for dyslexia. The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or with a statement is similar to the national average. The college has specialist status in technology and humanities. It is also designated as a training school and became an academy converter in April 2011. The college is located on two main sites, one mile apart, in different areas of Crediton. Years 7 and 8 are on one site, with Years 9 to 13 and the boarding houses on the other. The college meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4. The college has a number of awards including Sportsmark, Artsmark and Investors in People. The college is the only state boarding school in Devon. Boarding is provided for boys and girls aged between 11 and 19 years. There are currently 50 boarders.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	3

Key findings

- The overall effectiveness of the college is satisfactory. The boarding experience and outcomes are good. The college has a friendly, welcoming ethos, students behave well and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The college is no longer judged good because inconsistencies in teaching mean that students are making satisfactory rather than good progress in Years 7 to 11. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Attainment at the end of Year 11 is broadly average. Students' achievement between Years 7 and 11 is satisfactory, but it is good in the sixth form. The achievement of disabled students or those with special educational needs, including those in the resource base, is satisfactory.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory but inconsistent. In the best lessons, teachers make good use of assessment data to plan engaging lessons that are well matched to students' needs and questioning effectively explores students' understanding. In less effective lessons, planning takes little account of the varying needs of learners, teachers talk for too long, do not actively involve students in learning and questioning is not used effectively to check students' learning or understanding. The quality of written feedback to students also varies in quality across the college.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Given their starting points students make good progress and achieve well. Teaching in the sixth form is good.
- Students' behaviour is good in lessons and around both college sites. Students feel safe with very little concern regarding bullying. Attendance is above the national average and exclusion rates are low.
- Senior leaders have a sound understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses. Recent improvement strategies, including performance management procedures, have had a positive impact on improving teaching and accelerating students' achievement, particularly in English. However, monitoring and tracking information is not being used strategically or robustly enough by both senior and middle leaders to ensure consistently good teaching, marking and achievement across the college.

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- The overall effectiveness of the boarding experience is good. The quality of care provided, robust safeguarding arrangements, and effective leadership and management of the boarding provision ensure that boarders achieve successful outcomes. All national minimum standards are met; however, boarding handbook information requires improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to be consistently good or better in order to increase students' progress in lessons and raise attainment, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers make effective use of data on students' attainment and learning needs to plan and teach lessons that are sufficiently challenging for all students
 - all teachers plan and deliver engaging lessons that actively involve students in the learning process to further develop their independent learning and thinking skills
 - all teachers use effective targeted questioning to explore and develop students' knowledge and understanding
 - students are given consistently good written feedback so that they are clear about what they need to do to improve.
- Ensure monitoring and tracking information is used both strategically and robustly by both senior and middle leaders to secure consistently good teaching, marking and achievement across the school.
- Revise the boarding handbook to ensure that the information is provided in a format that can be easily understood by all students.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Students' attainment on entry to the college is average. The attainment of students at the end of Year 11 has been broadly average for the past three years. The achievement of students between Years 7 and 11 is satisfactory, although there is some variation between subjects. For example, the progress made by Year 11 students in mathematics was satisfactory in 2011, it was weaker although satisfactory in science, but below expected levels in English. Lesson observations, scrutiny of work and assessment data analysed during this inspection indicate that attainment is rising in the college and that progress in English is accelerating and is now satisfactory.

Students have positive attitudes to learning and good relationships with teachers support their learning well. When students are given the opportunity to be actively involved in their learning they respond well and make good or even better progress. For example, in an outstanding Year 8 religious education lesson students were fully engaged and worked extremely effectively in pairs to produce presentations on possible conflicts between religious and scientific ideas. However, in some lessons teachers do not sufficiently match the level or nature of tasks to students' capabilities

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or specific needs and this is resulting in some variation in the achievement of different groups of students. For example, the progress made by boys between Years 7 and 11 has been below that of girls for the past three years and the progress made by Year 11 students entitled to free school meals was below the national average for similar students in 2011. The college is aware of these issues and effective action is being taken to address them. Lesson observations and analysis of college tracking data indicate that the achievement of both these groups of students is accelerating. Disabled students or those with special educational needs make similar satisfactory progress to their peers. Regular tracking of progress ensures that individual needs are quickly identified and appropriate in-class support organised. However, not all teachers are effectively planning for the specific learning needs of these students. Those students in the resource base with specific learning difficulties receive effective additional support.

The school has rightly identified the need to improve the literacy skills of students, particularly boys. There is a whole-school focus on the development of students' literacy skills, and the opportunities for them to produce pieces of extended writing. Some good examples were seen of effective approaches being used to develop students' literacy skills, including reading, in a few subjects and this is beginning to have a positive impact on raising students' achievement. However, this approach is not firmly embedded across all subjects.

The attainment of students entering the sixth form is lower than that seen nationally across all sixth forms. The progress made by students in Year 12 is satisfactory and the percentage of students continuing to follow courses in Year 13 is similar to the national average. The progress made by those students continuing to follow courses in Year 13 accelerates, and A-level examination results are similar those seen nationally. Given their starting points, the achievement of students in the sixth form is good; however, as in Years 7 to 11, there is some variation in achievement between subjects. Outcomes for boarders are good, particularly regarding the development of their personal, social and emotional skills. Academically they are achieving as well as day pupils.

Quality of teaching

The very large majority of parents and carers returning questionnaires judged that their children are taught well and make good progress in their learning. However, a number of parents and carers made reference to variations in the quality of teaching in the college and the quality and frequency of homework that is set. Inspectors agree there is both good and outstanding teaching in the college but overall it is too inconsistent in quality. There is too much satisfactory teaching and a very small amount that is inadequate. As a result, students make satisfactory rather than good progress over time between Years 7 to 11. Teaching in the sixth form is good, resulting in good outcomes.

Teachers have good subject knowledge and this is generally used well to plan lessons that are clearly linked to intended learning outcomes. In the better lessons,

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activities creatively involve students in learning through interesting tasks that are well matched to their ability. In these lessons, careful, directed questioning from the teacher also explores and develops students understanding well. For example, in an engaging Year 10 science lesson students developed a good understanding of how to calculate the energy content of food by designing and carrying out their own investigations. During the practical work, the teacher checked and challenged the students' thinking through effective questioning as he circulated around the groups. Where the quality of teaching is no better than satisfactory, the features of these best lessons are not always evident. In these lessons, teachers talk for too long and do not provide interesting activities that actively engage and motivate students and help develop their independent learning and thinking skills. Tasks tend to be set at one level and there is insufficient support for lower attaining students or insufficient challenge for the more able. Questioning tends to only check students' knowledge, rather than delving deeper to explore and develop their understanding.

A range of suitable teaching strategies supports disabled students and those with special educational needs. Amongst the most effective of these are in-class support by specially trained learning assistants and small-group teaching. Lesson plans identify students with special needs and in the majority of cases outline targeted approaches to support their learning. Where appropriate, the majority of teachers also provide prompt sheets to help students organise their ideas confidently.

Students are aware of their targets and how well they are doing; however, they are less clear about what they must improve. Some marking is of high quality, follows the new college guidelines and provides clear advice to students about how to move from one level or grade to another. However, this good practice is not consistent across the college and teachers' written comments vary in the detail and advice that they provide.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

There is a calm and pleasant atmosphere around both college sites during break and lunchtimes. Generally, students behave well and are respectful of each other. They socialise well and have a good moral understanding of right and wrong. Questionnaires returned by parents, carers and students indicate that they believe behaviour is generally good in the college, although a number did raise some concerns over low-level disruption in lessons. Inspectors found that behaviour in lessons is good and on the rare occasion when low-level disruption occurs, it is in almost all cases a response to less engaging teaching. The attendance of students has improved during the past year and is now above average. Exclusions from college are below average. Behaviour for learning is generally good, particularly where teachers provide opportunities for students to think and learn for themselves and promote independent working. The very large majority of parents and carers think that their children are safe and are well looked after. Students reported that they felt safe and that incidents of bullying were rare, and they were confident that the college dealt effectively with any incidents that did occur. Students showed a good understanding of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying and that

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based on prejudice, including homophobic bullying.

Boarding students feel safe and well cared for. They are provided with good guidance and information about how to keep themselves safe and secure in various situations. This has included training in using the internet and social media safely. Boarders report that bullying is very rare and staff follow up any incidents appropriately. There are effective safeguarding procedures which are implemented stringently by staff. The college counsellor and nurse provide students with excellent support and guidance to help them make safe and considered choices. This ensures students' emotional and physical health needs are well met. Behaviour in boarding is good. There is a positive approach to managing behaviour and boarders like the recently implemented reward system.

Leadership and management

The high expectations of senior leaders are evident in the challenging targets set for students. The progress of students towards these targets is tracked well and information is stored centrally and available to all staff. Some middle leaders analyse this data forensically to highlight areas of weaker performance and drive improvement, but this good practice is not consistently in place across the college. Senior leaders recognise that for a period following the previous inspection the monitoring of teaching was not sufficiently frequent or robust. As a result, the overall quality of teaching declined from good to satisfactory. In the past year, more frequent and robust systems for monitoring teaching have been put in place. This, combined with effective support and professional development for members of staff, is beginning to have a positive impact. Although teaching remains satisfactory, it is improving. Line management meetings between senior and middle leaders are becoming increasingly effective at driving improvement; however, they are not ensuring sufficient consistency in teaching, marking and students' achievement across the college. Senior and middle leaders have a sound understanding of the college's strengths and weaknesses and a clear plan is in place to drive improvement. Recent successful action to improve teaching, achievement in English and attendance, plus maintenance of good behaviour, and the quality of the boarding experience demonstrate the college's capacity for improvement.

The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. The college provides many good opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through subjects such as 'world issues' and through the college's cross-curricular focus on 'skills for success'. These opportunities, plus the broad range of extra-curricular activities available to students, ensure they leave the college as well-rounded young citizens.

The governing body is experienced and knowledgeable and is aware of the college's strengths and areas for improvement. The governors provide senior leaders with an appropriate level of challenge. The governing body works with managers to ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements. The importance the college places on equality of opportunity is evident in the successful work it is

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undertaking to close the achievement gap between groups of students. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated. Some parents and carers expressed a concern during the inspection that the issues they raised with college leaders were not always taken sufficiently seriously or responded to promptly. This concern was shared and discussed with the senior leadership team.

Leadership and management of boarding are good. All of the required boarding policies are in place and they are implemented effectively. Boarders and parents and carers are happy with boarding arrangements and their impact, particularly on their children's personal development. Boarding managers regularly assess the quality of boarding provision. This includes termly self-evaluation against boarding standards and the regular monitoring of records. As a result, boarding managers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and a suitably challenging development plan is in place. The provision demonstrates capacity for continuing improvement in that action has been taken to successfully address recommendations from the previous boarding inspection. This has included a new behaviour and rewards system, improvements to the accommodation, more robust medication systems and improved consultation with boarding students.

Boarding provision

The overall effectiveness of the boarding experience is good. Outcomes and the quality of provision for boarders are also good. The experience of boarding has a positive impact on developing personal, social and learning outcomes for students. Boarders develop self-confidence, learn practical and social skills, and take increasing responsibility for managing their academic and social programme. Consequently, boarders are independent and emotionally resilient. Students recognise that the experience of boarding life has prepared them well for further education and adult life.

The quality of relationships and behaviour within the boarding provision are strong and positive. There is a unified approach to welcoming new students, underpinned by mutual respect and encouragement of each other. Consequently, boarders enjoy a sense of belonging and feel a genuine affinity to the boarding community. Boarders value their friendships with peers and the successful and constructive relationships they enjoy with members of staff. Boarders feel cared for and secure; they are confident that their worries or concerns are responded to positively and they are given appropriate guidance to make good choices. Boarding staff are positive role models and are skilled at balancing a nurturing approach with maintaining safe boundaries. Induction for new students is carefully managed; however, written information about the boarding provision is not available in a format that can be easily understood by all boarders.

Pastoral support is purposeful and effective. Comprehensive care planning, risk assessment, and robust management of medication underpin this. Boarders are provided with excellent information, guidance, and support relating to health and emotional well-being. Boarders enjoy healthy lifestyles and are motivated to keep themselves active and fit. Boarding practices foster a sense of responsibility for learning and education. Teaching and boarding staff work together to monitor students' achievement and provide support for homework.

Consultation with boarders has improved. Regular house meetings and boarders council sessions have ensured students are empowered to influence the running of boarding. Students have recently produced a newsletter, aptly titled *Boarderline*, to keep boarders and their families up to date with developments and activities. There is a good range of purposeful and interesting leisure activities. Boarders make good use of the college facilities and enjoy being enabled to spend free time in the local community. Boarders spoke enthusiastically about the residential holidays and how they helped them to settle into boarding, make enduring friendships, and have the confidence to try new experiences.

Since the last inspection positive changes have been made to the accommodation. This has resulted in improved bathroom facilities and more modern and homely communal areas.

National minimum standards

- The school meets all the national minimum standards for boarding schools.

These are the grades for the boarding provision

Overall effectiveness of the boarding experience	2
Outcomes for boarders	2
Quality of boarding provision and care	2
Boarders' safety	2
Leadership and management of boarding	2

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	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons, and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

29 June 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Academy Trust,
Crediton EX17 3LU**



Thank you for being so welcoming when inspectors came to inspect your college recently. We very much enjoyed our discussions with you. Now that we have finished the inspection, we wanted to let you know our findings. We think the college provides you with a satisfactory education in Years 7 to 11. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and boarding experience are good. Here is a list of the college's main strengths.

- The college has a friendly, welcoming ethos. Your behaviour in lessons and around both college sites is good.
- You told us that you feel safe and that you are confident staff will deal quickly and effectively with any concerns you raise with them.
- As a result of good teaching in the sixth form you are making good progress in the subjects you are following.
- You enjoy college and your attendance is above average.
- The college provides many good opportunities for your spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, both in lessons and through the broad range of extra-curricular activities on offer. This is helping you develop into well-rounded young citizens.
- Those of you who are boarders spoke positively about your boarding experiences.

You told us that the quality of teaching varies across the college. We agree. Although there is some good and outstanding teaching in the college, there is too much that is satisfactory to ensure that you make good progress between Years 7 and 11. To improve teaching we have asked senior leaders to ensure that all teachers provide you with engaging tasks that are well matched to your ability, questioning is used effectively to check your learning and understanding, and, that marking gives you clear advice about how to improve. We have also asked college leaders to ensure that you make similar, good progress in all your subjects. We have asked those managing the boarding provision to ensure the boarding handbook can be easily understood by all boarders.

You can help to make these improvements by continuing to attend regularly and continuing to get actively involved in activities arranged for you by staff.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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