

Queensbury School

Wood End Road, Erdington, Birmingham, B24 8BL

Inspection dates

31 January–1 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has made good improvements in all areas since the last inspection.
- Students achieve well and gain some good results, given their low starting points when they start at the school.
- Students' behaviour is good in classes and around the school. They are polite, friendly and a credit to the school.
- The sixth form is good and has improved since the last inspection. It gives students a distinct experience that is matched well to their increasing maturity. Students are prepared well for the next stage of their lives through relevant courses and opportunities.
- Leadership and management, including the governance of the school, are good. Senior leaders consider carefully how aspects of the school can be further improved and are ambitious for the school to be outstanding.
- Teachers' performance is closely reviewed and they receive good support. This has been one of the contributory factors in improvements in teaching and achievement.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well. Students show good levels of respect for each other, staff and visitors.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is mainly good but not enough is outstanding.
- There are some inconsistencies in applying the school's marking and homework policies across the school.
- In lessons, tasks are not always matched closely enough to students' different abilities.
- Some resources are limited and of poor quality.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 17 lessons, most of which were joint observations with different members of the senior leadership team.
- Discussions were held with senior leaders, students, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspection team took account of the 16 responses from parents to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and also considered the school's recent survey of parents' views. The inspection team looked at a range of documentation including the school's information on pupils' progress, its self-evaluation, development plans and information relating to the safeguarding of students.

Inspection team

Frank Price, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional Inspector

Rosemary Barnfield

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Queensbury School is a large special school serving the north-east area of Birmingham.
- All students have a statement of special educational needs. There is a wide mix of learning needs, including moderate learning difficulties, autism and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Most students also have some form of speech and language difficulty.
- The school population is ethnically diverse, with a higher than average number of students who come from backgrounds where English is an additional language.
- Just over three-quarters of students are boys.
- The school does not use any form of alternative provision for its students.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional funding allocated by the government for certain groups of pupils, in this case, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and who are looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The school recently achieved the Investors in People (Silver) award.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that more is outstanding and raise students' achievement by:
 - making sure teachers match work to the different levels of students' ability more closely
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of homework
 - making sure the marking of students' work is more consistent and that they are given clear advice on how to improve their work
 - improving the range and quality of resources.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- By the age of 16, students achieve well in a range of qualifications in different subjects. Students who would previously have gained higher entry level qualifications are now able to achieve lower GCSE grades in English and mathematics. To give students the best chance of succeeding, the school does not enter them early for examinations.
- Students' achievement in information and communication technology is outstanding. An impressive number of students gain a grade C at GCSE, and others achieve high entry level grades. All students achieve some form of nationally recognised qualification in a wide range of subjects such as art, design and technology, geography and media studies.
- Students at post-16 achieve accredited awards in vocational subjects which help to prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. Students enjoy attending local college courses and participate in a good range of work-related experiences.
- The school makes a strong and concerted effort to support students' progress in literacy and numeracy. Reading is taught systematically, with additional reading sessions for students. This has been very effective and has resulted in good improvements in students' reading, writing and communication skills. Students' attainment in mathematics has also improved well.
- The achievement and progress of all groups of students is good, including those with moderate learning difficulties, autism and behavioural, social and emotional difficulties. Students of minority ethnic heritage and who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates.
- The school has made good use of assessment information to identify students with speech and language needs who required additional help to improve their communication skills. It has also identified girls who needed support and who had previously made the least amount of progress in reading. Extra help for many of these students has enabled them to improve their literacy and communication skills.
- The development of students' personal independence is outstanding. Students are taught by the school's travel trainer how to use local transport to attend school and college. As a result, many students are highly independent and confident in using public transport.
- Students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding make good progress. This funding has provided further support for these students' speech and language needs, smaller class groups and extra help with reading. This has enabled students who are known to be eligible for free school meals to close the gap between their attainment and that of their peers, particularly in English.
- In one post-16 lesson, students learned the importance of good speaking and listening skills and how to retain information. They made good progress in becoming confident communicators. Nearly all the parents who responded to the online questionnaire or the school's own parental survey are pleased with the progress their children make.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teaching has improved well over the last three years, with the majority of teaching now being good. One of the reasons for the improvement in teaching has been an intense programme for teachers to improve their teaching from one grade to the next. While teaching is typically good, not enough is currently outstanding and there is a minority of lessons where some practice requires improvement.
- Where teaching is most effective, students are highly engaged by lively activities, which capture their attention. This was evident in a history lesson, where students tried on chainmail to see how heavy it was and realised how difficult it would be to fight in this. In an information and

communication technology lesson, practical activities enlivened learning and enabled students to learn how to use cells. Tablet computers, provided through the use of additional funding, were used for particular students to enable them to keep pace with the rest of the class.

- Lessons generally are well planned and in the best examples, work is well matched to students' different ability levels, so that students do not all do the same task regardless of ability. However, this is not always the case and in weaker lessons not enough thought is given as to how to make tasks suitable for less-able students.
- Due to budgetary restrictions, the range and quality of some resources limit the effectiveness of teaching. For example, there are not always enough reading books for each student, meaning that they have to read from photocopied extracts of books and this diminishes their pleasure in handling books and reading the précis about the author or the story.
- There are some good examples of the marking of students' work. In the best practice, the school's marking policy is implemented well and students are given clear guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. However, this is not universal across the school.
- The position is similar in regard to the setting of homework. Not all teachers make enough use of homework and some parents consider that the use of homework could be improved and the school has plans to address this.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Relationships between staff and students, and between students, are outstanding. The school is a harmonious place and students are friendly, welcoming and good ambassadors for the school and most parents agree that the behaviour of students is good.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. The school celebrates the diversity of its staff and students. Students learn moral development through restorative justice sessions, where they reflect on how they should have reacted in situations and discuss how to prevent things going wrong next time. Learning mentors help students with particular issues to get back on track.
- Students' enjoyment of school is evident. In lessons, students are keen to learn. They speak warmly of lessons they like, and information and communication technology and drama were often identified as particular favourites.
- Behaviour is generally good. On occasions when teaching does not capture students' attention, some low level disruption and loss of concentration can occur. School records show that behaviour improves over time as a result of the school's effective management.
- Students said they feel safe in school and that they would know what to do if bullying was a problem. Safety and bullying, including cyber bullying, are covered in lessons such as personal, social and health education. Discriminatory behaviour is rare and dealt with well if it occurs.
- Lunchtimes are well-organised and pleasant social occasions. Students have a range of clubs and activities they can attend either at lunchtime or after school, such as boxing and drama.
- The attendance of students is average and the school has worked hard to stress the importance of good attendance and this has improved well.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, together with governors and senior leaders, provides determined leadership and has ensured good school improvement since the last inspection. The achievement of the recent Investors In People (Silver) award is an indication of the secure and effective leadership and management of the school. Staff are highly committed to the school and have been supported well with the pace of change.
- The school's budget is tight and the majority of its funds are appropriately spent on staffing.

However, this also means that other resources are often of limited quality and quantity. Despite the best efforts of the headteacher and governors, the accommodation is of poor quality and outside areas are drab.

- The planning for future school improvements is thorough. There are insightful evaluations by subject leaders which clearly identify the strengths and points for improvement in their areas. The key issues for improvement identified at the last inspection have been tackled well and the school has improved in all areas. Leaders and managers at all levels have pursued and secured improvements across the school, so that they are now well established.
- Pupil premium funding has been spent well. This has resulted in improvements in students' behaviour, in their self-esteem and an increase in reading confidence and fluency.
- The performance management of staff is good. There is a suitable match between the pay of teachers and their performance. Weaknesses in teaching have been tackled. Teachers have opportunities to go on short intensive courses to improve their teaching by at least one grade. This has helped teaching to be of generally good quality across the school.
- The local authority has a clear and accurate picture of the school. It has encouraged different schools to review each other's effectiveness, which has helped Queensbury, and provides support when requested.
- The range of subjects, qualifications and experiences that students have is good. There has been a strong focus on increasing their achievement in English and mathematics. Students at post-16 are able to follow courses which are highly relevant and give them plentiful opportunities to put their skills into practice. They gain a good range of accredited awards and regularly attend local colleges, for example, gaining skills in information and communication technology and woodwork. They have suitable work-related experiences to develop their personal and social skills.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body provides excellent challenge and support to the school. Its members have a good working knowledge of the school through regular visits to classes. They have managed a challenging budget carefully and been sensible in agreeing priorities. They have ensured that pupil premium funding for students has been spent wisely, so that the achievement gap is being closed well. They know that teaching has improved substantially and that it is now good. They understand how teachers' performance is checked and have made sure that the link between pay and quality of teaching is appropriate. Promotion within the school is carefully considered. Governors are provided with results of students' achievements and have enough understanding of data to be able to ask searching questions to check that students are being stretched. Governors receive good training and they have attended numerous courses on issues such as safeguarding, finance and special educational needs. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	103616
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	404881

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	247
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	62
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Penny Wagg
Headteacher	Veronica Jenkins
Date of previous school inspection	19 October 2010
Telephone number	0121 3735731
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