

Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School

High Street, Barnet, EN5 5RR

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good or better over time. Students do not always make the progress they should do.
- Teachers do not routinely adjust their teaching to ensure work is set at the right level. Too often work lacks challenge for the most able students and does not provide sufficient support for those who require it.
- Expectations of students' progress are too low and consequently even when students' targets are reached, these are not always sufficiently challenging to ensure students make good progress.
- The quality of marking and guidance to students is too variable. Often there is little or no guidance on how to further improve work.
- Some groups of students do not make good progress.
- The school does not yet have a clear enough picture of students' progress over time.
- School leaders, including governors, have an overly generous view of the school's performance. As a consequence, the school's development plan lacks the clarity and sharpness required to help move the school forward.
- Leaders' regular checks on the quality of teaching and learning do not focus sufficiently on how teachers are raising achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and other senior leaders understand that improvements are needed and have begun to implement changes.
- The school promotes the spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of learning well. As a result, students leave the school as confident, articulate young adults.
- Strong relationships are found throughout the school. As a result of this, behaviour is good and the school is a very safe place.
- Achievement in the sixth form and in some subjects is good.
- The most able students make good progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 40 lessons, 12 of which were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition there were three learning walks, two of which were accompanied by senior leaders.
- Inspectors held meetings with members of the senior leadership team, middle leaders and a range of staff across the school, the Chair of the Governing Body, three other governors and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation. This included the school's self-evaluation, the whole-school development plan, development plans for English, mathematics and science, information around students' attainment and progress, exclusions, behaviour logs and the school's records of lesson observations. Reports commissioned by the school from external consultants were also examined.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students' work and sampled books in English.
- Inspectors took into account the views of parents; this included a review of parents' responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online survey, and emails forward directly to the inspection team.
- Forty staff questionnaires were also returned and these were also reviewed.

Inspection team

Kevin Flanagan, Lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Gill Bal	Additional Inspector
Janice Howkins	Additional Inspector
Michael Pennington	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sandra Teacher	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is a larger than average girls' secondary school.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups is high. Half of the students attending the school are White British, with the next biggest group being students from other White backgrounds. The remainder of the school is very diverse with no other group being of a significant size.
- The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is high.
- The proportion of students who are supported through additional government funding is low.
- The proportion of students who are supported through school action is at the national average. The proportion of students who need extra help or have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- A small number of students attend off-site training on a part-time basis at Barnet College and one student attends Barnet and Southgate College full time.
- Some students are entered early in a range of subjects. This includes GCSE mathematics and additional GCSE subjects such as media taken after school as a part of the extra-curricular provision.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and performance.
- Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School converted to become an academy school in August 2011. When its predecessor school Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be an outstanding school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, by:
 - sharing existing good and outstanding practice more effectively
 - consistently having the highest expectations for all groups of students
 - raising the quality of marking and guidance so that all students know how to improve their work
 - making sure that the checks on students' progress is accurate and informs teachers' lesson planning.
- Make better use of students' progress information to track the progress of all groups of students, intervening where necessary so that all groups make good or better progress.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management, by:
 - ensuring that self-evaluation is undertaken rigorously and robustly
 - drawing-up school development plans that allow for measurable outcomes and have clear steps planned for their review by both leaders and governors.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the school with attainment that is significantly above their peers.
- The percentage of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, in 2013 was 74%. This was a considerable rise from the school's performance in 2012, when it was 58%. Results in 2013 were significantly above the national average and have almost recovered to the high levels of performance seen in 2011.
- The school took concerted action to improve outcomes for students in 2013 in both English and mathematics.
- Students known to be eligible for additional government funding do not make good progress in both English and mathematics. Gaps between these students and their peers are at best remaining the same, but in many cases are widening significantly. Many of these students fail to make reasonable rates of progress in both English and mathematics, despite entering the school with high levels of attainment.
- Eighty per cent of non-pupil-premium students gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics, compared to 47% of pupil-premium students who gained this same measure.
- Students on A-level courses make good progress. The progress students make on AS courses has also improved and is now good. Good and better teaching in sixth form lessons is leading to this good achievement.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make similar progress to their peers, as do those who speak English as an additional language.
- Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to help students make gains in both their literacy and numeracy skills. However, the school does not track this discrete group systematically.
- Early entry, particularly in mathematics, has depressed the achievement of some students. Some students who are capable of obtaining A* or A grades, have in fact achieved a grade B.
- Students attending training off site take a vocational course. This is not at the same academic standard as the GCSE courses these students follow in school. Progress is good on this course.
- Targets are set for all students. However, these targets are not sufficiently challenging and the same system is employed for all students. This leads to targets that do not promote rapid gains in progress or close the gap between groups.
- The school is currently reviewing the way that it tracks and intervenes with groups of pupils that need additional support. This new system contains a level of detail not seen elsewhere on the school's tracking systems and is designed to intervene to improve a student's progress at an earlier time. However, this is at its initial stages and as such, no impact can be measured.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement, because it does not ensure that all students make expected and better progress. Lessons are not planned with a detailed understanding of students' individual needs. A one-size-fits-all approach to learning is evident in many lessons and this prevents all students from making the progress they should.
- The school has reviewed the way that teachers should mark and assess students' work. In the more effective teaching a dialogue between the teacher and students leads to improvements and better progress. This is, however, an exception and too often books are not marked, or do not follow the procedures expected by the school.
- Weaker teaching is characterised by a lack of challenge and teachers moving on through the lesson without checking if students understand what they are learning. This leads to students completing tasks, but not making the progress in their learning that they should.

- Better teaching leads to some effective learning, but this is not frequent enough. These lessons have a faster pace and provide the level of challenge that individual students require, and teachers adjust their teaching as the lesson progresses. Teachers' high expectations lead to faster rates of progress: this quality of teaching occurs most often in the sixth form.
- Some additional adults are used effectively to support learning and they know the students very well. There is, however, a lack of joint planning between teachers and additional adults in some cases. On occasion this can lead to opportunities to support students being lost and time wasted.
- Lessons are for the most part characterised by strong personal relationships between students and their teachers. These good relationships support the effective classroom learning and even when teaching is not as effective as it might be, students show a continued desire to learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Students behave well in lessons and around the school, and they are eager to learn. This good behaviour and their positive attitudes to learning contribute strongly to the culture and ethos in the school.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, when students are faced with a change of teacher, they behave less well. This slows the pace of learning and means that not all students make the progress they could.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Students are safe in school and describe the school as a very safe place. They also appreciate the many opportunities that the school gives them to learn how to keep safe outside of school. This has included work around e-safety and how to keep safe in the community.
- Bullying and acts of unkindness are extremely rare. When these do happen students know who to approach for help and the school quickly deals with the issue. The school is an extremely tolerant community; students and all adults have strong, supportive relationships. Most parents who responded through 'Parent View' feel that their children are safe and behave well.
- Attendance at school is high and persistent absence is low. Punctuality to school is good; few students are late in the morning. A small number of students are late to lessons; this is more so in the afternoon.
- The headteacher has made use of permanent exclusion in the last academic year. School policy and procedures have been carefully followed and documented, and the exclusions follow the school's behaviour policy.
- The school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. The students experience a rich and varied extra-curricular provision, from attending the theatre to visits to other countries, to support their learning. These opportunities contribute well to students' personal development.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The headteacher has a clear vision and passion for the success of her students and this is shared by the senior leadership team. However, leadership and management are not yet good because there has been a lack of focus on improving some subjects and on some groups of students. Actions to improve the performance of all students have not always had the desired outcome and there is too little measurement of impact to allow leaders to talk with authority about their successes.
- The range of improvement strategies used by the school is unsustainable in the longer term. A key focus for the school last academic year was the improvement of students in the middle ability group. Interventions did not bring about the improvements to this group desired by

leaders, and despite this, the focus this year has shifted to students who are eligible for additional government funding. A great deal of resources has been given over to interventions and these have not been matched by an investment in improving teaching.

- Senior and middle leaders conduct a range of lesson observations, some of which are drop-in observations. Joint observations conducted with senior leaders during the inspection showed that the view of senior leaders was closely aligned with inspectors.
- There is a significant difference in the quality of teaching observed by senior leaders when drop-in, rather than pre-planned, observations take place. The school, however, retained an overly generous view of teaching and did not always triangulate activity in a classroom with information on students' progress. As a result, the progress by all students over time has not been given a sufficiently high enough focus.
- There is a robust and challenging performance management policy. The headteacher is clear that pay progression must be linked to better outcomes for students and has taken the decision to withdraw increases to some teachers' pay. However, the policy is undermined by the overly generous view that senior and middle leaders hold on teaching.
- The school does not have an accurate understanding of its own performance. The school self-evaluation lacks a robust evidence base and makes judgements that are not always supported by data. This in turn leads to school improvement planning that lacks the clarity necessary to identify the areas of the school that most need developing. Actions within the plans are often generic and lack clear, time-defined outcomes.
- Middle leaders have a clear commitment to improving the outcomes for students and have used their leadership to make changes within their departments. While some of these developments have brought about improvements in students' outcomes, others have not, and too little attention has been given by some middle leaders to evaluating the impact of change. Variability in the quality of planning and marking is evident across differing departments; middle leaders as a whole have not done enough to ensure that all teaching is of the highest quality.
- The local authority has moved to a light-touch, yearly visit since the school converted to academy status.
- The school has ensured that its safeguarding policies and procedures meet all requirements.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is clearly committed to the school and has a strong understanding of aspects of the school. Governors have worked extensively on financial matters and ensured that the conversion to academy status has been a success for the school financially. Developments throughout the school's premises have been guided and supported by strong governor involvement.
- The governing body has acted as a critical friend to the school and where appropriate has challenged the performance by and outcomes for students; for example, by actively sampling and reviewing targets set for teachers through the performance management procedures. However, governors have gained their knowledge and understanding of the school from the headteacher and senior leadership. The headteacher has attempted to keep the governing body informed at all times, but the school has been overly generous in its view of its own performance in the recent past. This in turn has meant that governors have not always had the level of information required to fully challenge and support senior leaders over the quality of teaching and students' progress. As a result, the governing body has not held the school's leaders sufficiently to account and students' progress has not always been fast enough.
- The governing body ensures that safeguarding requirements are met and financial management is secure.

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	137131
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	441123

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Girls
Number of pupils on the school roll	1175
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Hilary Chamberlain
Headteacher	Kate Webster
Telephone number	020 8449 2984
Fax number	020 8441 2322
Email address	office@qegschool.org.uk

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