

Queensbury Academy

Langdale Road, Dunstable LU6 3BU

Inspection dates

13–14 September 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders have established a culture of high expectation across the community. The school is well led and senior leaders understand the schools' strengths and areas for further development.
- Governors were swift to challenge senior leaders about 2017 GCSE and A-level results that were disappointing in some subjects. Leaders have since taken decisive action.
- Teaching is consistently good in most subjects. Leaders have worked hard to ensure that teachers ask challenging questions and are ambitious for their classes. Pupils are confident during the lessons and enjoy their learning.
- Progress in Years 7 to 10 is strong. Leaders set aspirational targets and pupils strive to achieve them. Plans to secure improvement in other year groups are robust and well defined. The school has sound procedures to support the progress of pupils who join mid-year.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are now making good progress. This is notable in the lower year groups.
- Behaviour in the school is good. Pupils are respectful of their teachers and each other. They mix well together in social spaces, although on a few occasions some pupils' behaviour falls short of school expectations during lessons.
- The school promotes pupils' and students' welfare effectively. Staff are very committed to improving the life chances of all pupils and raising their aspirations. Senior leaders and governors are keen for pupils to be successful.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils are safe and feel safe. The school is a harmonious community where respect and the Queensbury values are upheld by all.
- The sixth form is good. It offers a range of appropriate courses and these are well taught. Leaders have ambition for outcomes to improve further and have detailed plans to ensure that this happens. Sixth-form students have high aspirations and all go on to university or further training.

Full report

What does the academy need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that outcomes improve further at GCSE and A level by:
 - making sure that all groups of pupils make substantial progress from their starting points
 - continuing with robust plans for those pupils who join the school mid-year and ensuring that they make good progress
 - minimising the small amount of off-task behaviour in lessons by ensuring that teachers follow school protocols.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The principal's resolute leadership and unwavering commitment to high standards have ensured that the school maintained a stable position during a difficult period. Despite some considerable challenges, the principal has led with strength and the school is well organised and ambitious. He has secured a learning community based on shared values and a commitment that the school will provide the best education and pathways to further study.
- Several significant issues meant that outcomes for 2016 and 2017 were disappointing. The principal makes decisions in the interests of the pupils and is not afraid to demand high standards of all teams: new staff have since been recruited to the middle and senior leadership teams. As a result, both leadership teams have been considerably strengthened and this capacity has already had an impact on pupils' progress. The successful induction of these new staff is important to securing the improvements seen.
- Staff are proud to work at the school. They match the ambition of senior leaders and display a commitment to pupils' success. Leaders ensure that staff are well trained and can explore the areas of teaching that work best for their pupils. Leaders hold staff to account for practice that falls below school expectations, and performance management is used effectively to monitor teaching standards. Leaders also have a well-developed system of lesson monitoring and staff training to ensure that teachers are clear on expectations.
- Procedures to track pupils' achievement are secure. Leaders are meticulous in ensuring that progress is monitored carefully, and this ensures that pupils are not at risk of falling behind without staff knowing. Leaders have identified that previously some disadvantaged pupils did not make enough progress, and they have taken decisive action to address this. Leaders use pupil premium funding well to support vulnerable pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, but recognise that further developments are needed.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is appropriate and offers good opportunities to pupils. They have underpinned the curriculum design with the Queensbury value of aspiration and pupils follow programmes of study that stretch and challenge them. Pupils are flourishing, especially in the lower years, and say they enjoy the course options given to them. The curriculum is enriched with wider activities, such as theatre trips in English, and celebrity guest speakers. Year 7 catch-up funding is used appropriately and progress in Year 7 is now strong.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively. Pupils are taught to have a keen sense of values based on cooperation, aspiration, respect and endeavour. This is reinforced in the programme of life skills studied at key stage 3. As a result, pupils are confident and articulate in their views.

Governance of the academy

- The school is part of a multi-academy trust and governance responsibilities are shared between the trust and the local governing body. Both have considerable expertise and are well trained to support the headteacher. Governors and the trust visit regularly and challenge the school to drive for improvements. Their input has led to positive change within the school. For example, the trust is instrumental in setting challenging academic targets for key stages 3 and 4, which has helped to raise standards.
- Governors and the trust use external support to review areas of the school. This means that they better understand the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are confident in leaders' abilities to evaluate and plan for the school's future.
- Governors and the trust align with the school's vision to be the best local education provider. They give support by providing professional guidance to the headteacher and facilitating partnerships with the trust's other secondary schools.
- Governors have a strong moral purpose and are committed to ensuring that the local town has an excellent school that provides education from key stage 3 to key stage 5.
- Governors have a good understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They are all appropriately trained and visit the school to ensure that procedures are carried out in line with statutory expectations.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's procedures for the safe recruitment of staff are secure.
- Leaders understand their role in safeguarding well and ensure that staff are trained to ensure that pupils are kept safe. The school prepares the pupils well so that they can keep themselves safe. Issues such as radicalisation are topical in the local town and the school handles such issues with sensitivity.
- Parents and pupils say the school is safe. Pupils are taught effectively how to keep themselves safe online.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good. Teachers enjoy their work and this leads to an excellent teaching and learning relationship between staff and pupils.
- The quality of teaching facilitates good pupil progress and helps some pupils to move rapidly through the curriculum. Pupils are confident and enthusiastic in lessons. Most lessons at the school are characterised by confident pupils enjoying their learning.
- Teachers use skilful questioning. They employ appropriate techniques to develop pupils' engagement and to ensure that pupils are developing mastery in the topics covered. This is a strong feature of teaching, seen across most subjects, and pupils' progress is enhanced as a result.
- Teachers consistently show high expectations of pupils. Active engagement is required from pupils and is readily given. Pupils engage fully with the lessons, as they are appropriately planned and designed to stimulate their interest.

- Teachers regularly check pupils' progress throughout the year and they use this information to support pupils who are underperforming. Pupils benefit from the feedback given to them, which helps them to make good progress. However, not all teachers give feedback according to the school's policy.
- Pupils' books reflect the high expectations of the school. For example, Year 7 pupils regularly complete extended writing based on their own ideas in English. They must read in class every day, which they say helps them to develop their vocabulary and expression.
- In a few lessons where school protocols for behaviour were not consistently or skilfully applied, pupils' progress was not as strong and fell short of school expectations. Leaders are aware of this, and have already taken steps to address it. Leaders recognise that teaching in history needs to improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school. They appreciate their teachers and enjoy the educational experience provided for them. In Years 7 to 9, for many pupils, the school was their first choice and they would not change this. All pupils are familiar with the Queensbury values and this shows in their behaviour around the site.
- Pupils say that bullying is rare in school. When it does occur, staff are quick and firm in dealing with it. They say the school is a tolerant community where difference is accepted. Pupils report very few racist incidents, and this is confirmed by school records.
- Teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to enrich their learning. During the inspection, Year 8 pupils were debating how it might feel to have Asperger's syndrome and were studying a popular children's book on the topic. Pupils say that staff go out of their way to ensure that the lessons are relevant to daily life and that this gives them the confidence to discuss contemporary issues.
- Pupil leadership is an important feature of the school. In all key stages, pupils have multiple opportunities to serve their community as leaders, and this is something they aspire to.
- Pupils and parents are complimentary about the care the school provides. Pupils' safety and welfare are paramount to all staff. New pastoral leaders have been appointed and they provide welcome capacity in this aspect of the school.
- The school has four pupils at alternative education provision. The welfare, behaviour and progress of these pupils are carefully monitored by leaders.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils and staff say they are proud of their school and the atmosphere around the buildings is positive. Pastoral leaders ensure that pupils are taught qualities such as

kindness and respect. This was seen in assembly and during tutor periods. The emphasis staff place on the values of the school has led to a harmonious community. Pupils are very well behaved during their breaktimes and lunchtimes.

- Pupils' attendance at school is now good and is rising. Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities now have attendance in line with other pupils in the school and with pupils nationally. Persistent absence is below the national figure. Pastoral leaders are diligent in engaging parents to ensure good attendance and have worked hard to stabilise attendance, despite the high numbers of mid-year admissions. However, they recognise the need to analyse the impact of their work further to determine which strategies work well.
- Behaviour in most lessons is very good. However, when a teacher does not enforce the school's protocols, students are less likely to regulate their own behaviour; this sometimes leads to low-level disruption.
- The number of exclusions last year was high. Leaders were determined not to allow the negative behaviour of pupils newly admitted to the school to disrupt learning and took decisive action. The school now has a stable and oversubscribed population, especially in the lower year groups, and behaviour is typically good.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- For the past four years, pupils have arrived at the school with low academic attainment. Teachers use a range of assessment information to ensure that pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Current pupils in Years 7 to 10 make good progress against challenging targets across a range of subjects, including mathematics, English, science and modern foreign languages. This is due to good teaching and strong pupil engagement, with teachers taking time to challenge students appropriately. The impact on progress of extra funding for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for those who are disadvantaged is notable in these year groups. The tracking systems used are detailed and robust at both senior and middle leadership level.
- Although outcomes have had a rising trajectory for the previous three years, past Year 11 GCSE outcomes have been below national expectations. The picture remains the same for current Year 11 pupils, including the most able pupils and the most able disadvantaged pupils. Leaders have a detailed understanding of both internal and external factors that caused this and have a robust plan to address the summer 2018 GCSE examinations. Outcomes in English have remained strong amid these challenging circumstances.
- Progress for disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities was rising by end of 2016/17. Their attainment has shown an upward trend for the past three years in English and mathematics at GCSE. Strategies to influence progress are clearly having an impact on these pupils. However, although progress is sustained, it is not rapid enough.
- Outcomes in foundation subjects need to rise. Leaders are aware of the variation in outcomes between subjects. Current progress data indicates that strategies such as key changes in leadership at middle level and increased capacity at senior level are

already having significant impact in Years 7 to 10.

- All pupils in Year 11 go on to further education or training. Leaders ensure that pupil outcomes provide a pathway to the next stage of education.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- The sixth form is good. Students have a wide choice of academic and vocational programmes within the two-school consortium. Private study areas and social facilities are good.
- Most students had below-expected attainment on entry in Year 12. Leaders invested well in resources to stabilise this position and enable students to catch up.
- Teaching is good. Students are optimistic about their learning and engage well during lessons. Teachers have high expectations of their students and use challenging activities to support their progress.
- Behaviour is very good. Students are aspirational, hardworking and mature. They conduct themselves in a courteous and articulate manner.
- New leaders have been recruited to the sixth form. This reflects the ambition held by the headteacher and governors to ensure that the provision is of the highest quality.
- School leaders are committed to improving outcomes for students. Students are expected to follow a supervised programme to help them make better use of their independent study time. Information on current progress for students in Year 13 indicates that, on average, students are on course to achieve grade C. Students are working towards challenging targets typical of the school.
- Retention between Years 12 and 13 is very high. This suggests that students are guided to make good initial course choices. Half the students who resit English or mathematics GCSE are successful in improving their grades. This is very high compared with the national average.
- All students undertake work experience related to their field of study and there are many opportunities for student leadership across the school.
- The quality of careers information and guidance is very good, and this means that all students can confidently progress to the next stage of their education or training. The majority of students go on to university. The remainder choose further study or apprenticeships.

School details

Unique reference number	138571
Local authority	Central Bedfordshire
Inspection number	10036250

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,044
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	120
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jeff Hooper
Headteacher	Oliver Button
Telephone number	01582 601241
Website	www.queensburyacademy.com
Email address	admin@queensburyacademy.com
Date of previous inspection	7 May 2014

Information about this school

- Queensbury Academy opened in September 2012 following the closure of its predecessor school, Queensbury Upper School.
- Queensbury is a large secondary school. The joint sixth-form provision with Manshead School is smaller than average.
- The school has just come through a period of challenge due to staff redundancies and over 200 mid-year pupil admissions in 18 months.
- Most pupils are White British and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is below average. The proportion of pupils who

have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- The academy is sponsored by the CfBT Schools Trust.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning across each year group and in a range of subjects, including in the sixth-form provision. Some lessons were observed jointly with school leaders. Inspectors visited form time and assembly.
- Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, governors and the trust.
- Inspectors held discussions with groups of pupils and observed behaviour at breaktimes and lunchtimes. Pupils' books across a range of subjects were scrutinised.
- A range of documentation and policies were scrutinised, including the school's self-evaluation, records of pupil behaviour and attendance, assessment information and the minutes of governing body meetings.
- Records of safeguarding policy and procedures were reviewed.
- Inspectors considered over 100 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and the Ofsted pupil survey.

Inspection team

Diana Osagie, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Martin Brown	Ofsted Inspector
John Constable	Ofsted Inspector

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