

Queensbury School

Wood End Road, Erdington, Birmingham, West Midlands B24 8BL

Inspection dates

21–22 March 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The senior leadership team is not united. Poor relationships among the most senior leaders are impacting negatively on staff morale.
- As a result of strained relationships, leaders do not have the capacity either to maintain the current quality of provision or to secure the improvements required.
- There have been substantial changes in the leadership structure over the last two years. These changes have not been managed in an effective way by governors.
- The school has received support from a wide range of external bodies. Leaders are currently heavily reliant on this support.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is over-generous and not adequately focused on the most pressing issues.
- Some middle leaders require additional support to ensure that they have greater impact on outcomes in their respective faculties.
- The last interim executive board (IEB) was dissolved by the local authority following concerns about its effectiveness.
- In recent months, leaders have not been adequately held to account. In particular, pupils' progress was not sufficiently scrutinised. Governors have not kept checks on the academic progress of the school's most vulnerable learners.
- Several teachers are currently absent from the school and the English department has been without a permanent leader for too long. As a result, the quality of teaching is variable, outcomes are not consistently strong and, on occasion, there is a lack of challenge for pupils. This is also the case in the school's sixth form.
- Assessment systems are not yet adequately embedded across the school, including in the sixth form. Further staff training and moderation are required to ensure that the judgements teachers make about pupils' progress are reliable.

The school has the following strengths

- Staff are committed to the pupils; they are caring and nurturing and want the very best for them. Staff and pupils enjoy excellent relationships.
- Pupils' behaviour and personal development has improved and is now good. Pupils' conduct is very strong and safeguarding is effective.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(2) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by making sure that:
 - support is established for all staff to address the concerns that have been raised about morale and well-being
 - senior leaders address and overcome the difficulties they are experiencing with one another
 - the school's workforce shares a common vision
 - leaders' self-evaluation and school development plans are more accurate, closely reflect the key priorities of the school and are understood by all stakeholders
 - the newly established IEB works with leaders and staff to fully understand the school's overall strengths and areas for development
 - the IEB routinely holds leaders to account for school performance and scrutinises the achievement of key groups, including that of disadvantaged pupils
 - middle leaders are provided with further support, learn from one another's best practice, and hone their respective faculty action plans
 - a permanent leader is appointed in English to offer greater oversight of teaching and additional subject expertise to staff in order to bring about higher standards
 - pupil premium expenditure is evaluated with greater rigour and governors support and challenge leaders to establish which are the most effective strategies for overcoming any barriers that pupils may face.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment, and thereby outcomes for pupils, by ensuring that:
 - teachers' planning routinely matches pupils needs and offers adequate challenge
 - any variation in the quality of teaching is further addressed through opportunities for teachers to learn from one another
 - leaders and teachers refine assessment systems, further moderate the judgements they make about pupils' performance and establish information that is valid and reliable.
- Improve provision within the school's sixth form by:
 - developing systems and procedures for tracking learners' performance as they progress through different study programmes
 - ensuring that learning builds upon previous skills and accreditation, and offers a consistently high level of challenge.

A review of governance is recommended in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

A review of pupil premium funding is recommended in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- There has been a breakdown in relationships between senior leaders at Queensbury. As a result, staff morale is low and the school lacks a clear direction. Over recent years, there have been several changes in leadership. Transition between different headteachers and teams has been poorly managed by governors. There is a lack of a common vision for improvement. Some staff report that they are not routinely told what is happening and why. Due to these poor relationships and the polarised views of staff, there is currently no capacity to maintain or secure further improvement.
- The local authority has commissioned their own personnel, and experts from other agencies, to support the school. This support has ensured that pupils continue to receive an acceptable standard of education. However, the support has not helped leaders manage differences in their relationships or keep the staff united.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is not accurate. Leaders have not taken sufficient account of the progress of pupils currently on the roll. Development plans do not adequately reflect the most important school improvement issues.
- Since September, although the local authority has maintained some oversight, there has been an insufficient scrutiny of standards. As a result, leaders have not been adequately held to account for pupils' progress.
- Leaders' plans for the expenditure of additional funding are not comprehensive enough. Plans are not adequately evaluated and do not set out the barriers that some pupils face to their learning. While the previous IEB did explore pupil outcomes, there is no evidence that additional funding was specifically reviewed. Consequently, it is not clear whether expenditure is achieving value for money.
- The school has many skilled and enthusiastic middle leaders. These leaders have received support from external experts commissioned by the local authority. There are particular strengths in the mathematics and science faculties. However, these strengths are not replicated across all departments. Some middle leaders do not yet have the skills to lead their respective faculties fully and effectively, including developing robust action plans.
- Senior leaders do have many skills and strengths. They provide staff with effective training and support to develop their practice, they timetable opportunities for staff to participate in 'collaborative sessions' where they teach together and learn from one another, and they are passionate about the children. However, their relationships have broken down. They acknowledge that the current situation is unacceptable and that it must improve rapidly.

- Despite the breakdown in relationship between leaders, and the level of change in recent years, staff remain committed to the pupils because they want the best for them. Staff and pupils enjoy being together.
- Leaders and staff have devised a curriculum that ensures that pupils have a breadth of experiences. Academic learning is complemented by extra-curricular activities and a strong promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in Year 9, pupils learn about how to keep fit, why rules are made and the importance of voting. During the inspection, a group of pupils were visiting Sutton Park to undertake orienteering. Pupils enjoy their studies and are happy at school.
- In English, the overall quality of teaching and learning, and resulting outcomes, are poorer than in other aspects of the curriculum. Leaders, and those charged with supporting the school, have not acted upon these shortcomings quickly enough. Currently the school is without a permanent leader for English and has been for some time.
- A range of external bodies, organisations and leaders have supported the school since the last inspection. The support received from a representative of Birmingham Education Partnership, commissioned by the local authority, has enabled the school to maintain a clear focus on developing the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Given the complexities that exist within the leadership and management team, leaders currently remain reliant on external support. Clear, concise and comprehensive support is required to reverse the school's current position.
- Though passionate about the pupils they teach, staff have very mixed and polarised views about the effectiveness of leadership and management. Many staff expressed their concerns throughout the inspection. Morale is low and some staff are worried about their well-being.
- Some parents and carers also have concerns about the school's effectiveness. While only a small number responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, written concerns were received regarding transport issues, changes in leadership and the quality of English teaching. Conversely, some parents wrote to the inspection team expressing how pleased they were with the school and how supportive they find it. A typical comment was, 'It is easy to see that staff value and care for pupils.'

Governance of the school

- Over time, governance has been ineffective.
- An IEB was established in 2015 to ensure that leaders were fully held to account for the impact of their actions and school performance. Minutes of board meetings show that leaders have been challenged about many aspects of school performance. However, the board has not met formally since September 2017 and was dissolved by the local authority in January 2018.
- The local authority has recently established a new IEB. Members have met to discuss terms of service and a further imminent meeting is scheduled. The chair and wider members of the new IEB have considerable skills and experience in the field of school improvement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's designated safeguarding lead is well organised and has established a range of effective systems to keep pupils safe.
- Staff devise risk assessments for individual pupils if additional concerns or needs are identified. These risk assessments include appropriate measures to offer pupils any necessary additional support.
- Staff training is comprehensive. Any concerns about pupils' welfare are carefully recorded and acted upon. Staff feel that pupils are safe. Pupils that inspectors spoke to also say that they feel safe. Many pupils are quick to identify that the school's learning mentors are people that they go to and share any worries or concerns that they may have with.
- Staff have appointed a leader to oversee transport arrangements for pupils. Both staff and parents raised concerns about the punctuality of taxi services. It is clear that some pupils spend a long time in taxis to get to and from the school. The school continues to work with travel partners to try to improve this situation.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies across the school. In the best lessons, teachers ask effective questions and pupils maintain high levels of engagement. However, these strengths are not routinely replicated across the school. On occasion, pupils listen for long periods of time and can lose focus. This hampers the progress that they make.
- The activities that are used by teachers to support learning can lack challenge. Stronger teachers adapt their plans or offer pupils additional challenges, but some teachers do not routinely change an activity if it becomes apparent that learning is too easy.
- Assessment systems have developed since the last inspection. Teachers are demonstrating greater confidence with these systems and are using their new knowledge to structure their planning. However, leaders have noticed that there are sometimes anomalies in the data presented by staff. There is variation between the performance of different groups, particularly for pupils who have an autistic spectrum disorder. Leaders are not confident that assessment information is sufficiently valid and reliable. Although moderation activities have taken place, there is more work to be done to ensure that teachers are confident in both the judgements that they make about pupils' progress and their use of the tracking tools.
- The progress that some key stage 4 pupils make in English is poor. Though pupils are now receiving more consistent support in English, there are some gaps in their learning and their work does not evidence strong progress. Leaders have not acted upon this

shortcoming quickly enough. For some time, the school has experienced staff absence in this department and has been without a specialist leader in English. Leaders state that this lack of specialist support has had an impact on the sixth form too.

- Teachers have established excellent relationships with pupils. Teachers use a '7 steps' approach to make learning as engaging and practical as possible. The quality of learning objectives has improved. Teachers tell pupils clearly about what they want them to achieve during lessons. On the whole, this results in appropriately paced lessons with effective questioning.
- Teaching is particularly strong in mathematics and science. Inspectors observed a highly effective science lesson, where the strong subject knowledge of teachers and support staff ensured that pupils were engaged, answering questions and developing their skills, knowledge and understanding. Similarly, inspectors noted pupils making strong progress in their art and drama lessons. In the school's design and technology class, pupils are designing and building a wide range of complex and innovative pieces, including storage racks, tanks, metal helmets and skulls.

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 confident individuals and enjoy learning with their peers.
- The school's curriculum ensures that pupils have opportunities to learn about key issues, including the dangers of drugs and alcohol, how to look after your body and how to share a worry or concern.
- Pupils have no concerns about bullying. The school has appointed mentors and sports leaders to give pupils responsibility and encourage support and cooperation.
- Pupils receive effective advice and careers guidance. The school has appointed a member of staff dedicated to promoting careers education. As a result, pupils have an awareness of the work they may want to do when they are older. As pupils progress through the school, they also enjoy opportunities to undertake work experience.
- The school's pastoral team has a very strong awareness of pupils' individual needs. The team offers effective support and guidance to pupils.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils are very courteous and extended a warm welcome to the inspection team. They say that behaviour is good in their school.
- During breaks and lunchtimes, corridors and the playground are calm and well ordered.
- Attendance has been variable in recent years and remains below the national average. The pastoral team keeps a close eye on any individuals who are a cause for concern. Additional support is established if attendance falters and there are clear expectations

about punctuality. Some pupils with previously very low attendance have seen marked improvements over time. Parents and staff state that transport issues contribute to some lower attendance. Leaders acknowledge that further work is required to address this particular issue and that attendance must remain a priority.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is not yet consistently strong across the curriculum. There is variation between different groups of pupils that has not been fully analysed or accounted for.
- In particular, progress is not strong enough in English. Some pupils in key stage 4 have not made the progress they are capable of in recent months. Leaders have not addressed this issue quickly enough.
- As a result of inconsistencies in how pupils are challenged, pupils' books do not routinely demonstrate strong progress.
- Disadvantaged pupils make progress similar to that of their peers. However, the strategies used to support this group of pupils have not been adequately evaluated to assess which have the most impact and why.
- Over time, the school has secured some strong outcomes for pupils as they reach the end of key stage 4. However, these historic strengths are not fully replicated in the work of the pupils who are currently on the roll.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics and science is a growing strength of the school. Pupils' work in these subjects frequently demonstrates progression. This is because of appropriately pitched activities and opportunities for pupils to apply reason and solve problems.
- The school's curriculum and overall offer ensure that pupils are prepared for the next stage of their lives. In particular, pupils are confident and self-assured and increasingly independent. This is due to the strong support and guidance they receive from staff.

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Many students choose to stay on into the school's sixth form. Leaders devise a range of study programmes to help students build on previous learning and explore vocational routes. The leader of the sixth form is passionate about her role.
- Though the development of English and mathematics skills remains a priority, some courses do not offer the scope of challenge required, given students' prior learning.
- Assessment systems are not fully established. Leaders are not yet tracking students' progress at sufficiently frequent intervals to establish any emerging strengths or areas for development.
- Leaders acknowledge that standards in English could be better and have been adversely affected by a lack of specialist support and the absence of leadership at a whole school level in this key area.

- Teachers' planning engages students and promotes their independence. During the inspection, students were observed effectively following instructions and working in teams to bake cakes. In another lesson, staff were helping students to develop their knowledge and understanding of measure by ordering different units and problem solving.
- There are strengths in teaching across the sixth form. As with the rest of the school, students enjoy excellent relationships with staff. Students are engaged in their learning and are provided with a wide range of opportunities to help develop their independence and support their progression to a range of destinations.
- Students receive effective careers advice and guidance and have opportunities to undertake work experience. Students develop their social skills and independence by visiting local shops, making use of different forms of public transport and undertaking study in life skills programmes.
- Students say that they feel safe. Behaviour is good across the sixth form. Students cooperate and interact with one another well. Inspectors observed students being well supported by staff to understand the importance of personal safety. Students explored how to manage personal possessions such as their phones and bags and minimise any risks to their safety.

School details

Unique reference number	103616
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	10042852

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	219
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	61
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	David Bishop
Headteacher	Veronica Jenkins
Telephone number	01213735731
Website	http://www.queensburysch.com
Email address	enquiry@queensbury.bham.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 January 2016

Information about this school

- Queensbury School caters for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Pupils have additional needs that include autistic spectrum disorder and speech, language and communication needs.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for approximately two thirds of the pupil population.
- Approximately half of the pupils are White British. Other pupils are from a diverse range of ethnic groups.

- Almost three quarters of pupils are boys.
- Post-16 students attend 'taster days' at alternative providers, including Birmingham Metropolitan College and South and City College Birmingham.
- The school has received support since the last inspection from Birmingham local authority and the Birmingham Education Partnership.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 24 parts of lessons, 11 jointly with school leaders.
- Inspectors undertook a book scrutiny focusing specifically on standards in English, mathematics and humanities. Scrutinies took account of learning in a range of year groups and were undertaken jointly with leaders. The lead inspector heard a small group of pupils from Years 7 and 8 read.
- A range of school documentation was scrutinised during the inspection including: the single central record; safeguarding systems and pupils' records; risk assessments; training records; records of lesson observations; and information relating to behaviour and attendance.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils at different points during the inspection. One pupil responded to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. Inspectors took account of 14 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View, 10 responses from parents via free text, a handwritten letter and a telephone discussion with a parent.
- Inspectors reviewed 35 responses to the staff survey, held an open meeting with staff on the first day of the inspection and met with staff individually and in small groups. The inspection team received four handwritten letters from staff.
- The lead inspector met with Birmingham City Council's assistant director, a representative from Birmingham Education Partnership and the chair of the new IEB.

Inspection team

Jonathan Keay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Matt Wilson

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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