

The Queen Katherine School

Appleby Road, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 6PJ

Inspection dates

22–23 May 2018

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders have made many substantial improvements to the school. However, it is not as good as they and governors think. There is still much to do to make sure that the school provides a good standard of education.
- Leaders are too confident about the school's strengths and this is misplaced. Leaders are over-reliant on a narrow range of data to inform their view of the quality of education that the school provides. They do not use enough information of different types to judge the success of their actions.
- Teaching focuses too much on developing pupils' skills. There is not enough focus on developing pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The curriculum is underdeveloped because there is too much emphasis on success in examinations rather than breadth and depth of learning. This hinders pupils from reaching their full potential.
- Teachers of subjects other than English do not consistently demonstrate the skills to develop pupils' literacy across the curriculum. Teachers themselves make basic mistakes in literacy.
- The overall attendance rate is below the national average. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who regularly miss school continues to be high and shows very little sign of improvement. This has a detrimental impact on the progress that some disadvantaged pupils make.

The school has the following strengths

- Outcomes for pupils are improving. Improvements since the last inspection have been rapid for some groups of pupils and in some subjects.
- Pupils are proud to belong to The Queen Katherine School and believe that the school is in a better place than it was 18 months ago.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around school. They are a credit to their school and to their families.
- Safeguarding is effective. Pupils feel safe at school and there is a tangible culture of safeguarding.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress. They enjoy their time at school and their studies.
- Nearly all pupils go on to further education, employment or training after leaving the school.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that leaders, including governors, use a wider range of accurate information and evidence to make honest evaluations of the quality of education at the school.
- Ensure that the curriculum develops and deepens pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Ensure that teaching gives greater weight to developing pupils' knowledge and understanding so that pupils' learning is embedded and they know and remember more.
- Ensure that teachers and pupils consistently use basic literacy skills accurately.
- Ensure that attendance continues to improve and that the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent, especially those who are disadvantaged, decreases so that these pupils make stronger progress.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders at all levels have been successful in taking effective action to address the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. Some actions have proved more effective than others. For example, safeguarding is now a strength, pupils' outcomes are improving and pupils' behaviour around school and their attitudes to learning are much stronger.
- Leaders have a clear ambition and vision for the school. These are clearly articulated and the overwhelming majority of pupils and staff support their aims.
- Even though the school is improving, it is not as good as leaders consider it to be. Leaders place too much emphasis on a narrow range of data and this has not provided leaders with an accurate picture of what still needs to improve.
- Leaders have not developed the curriculum to deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding. Leaders have designed and built the curriculum around the content of examinations and assessment. This is hampering a number of pupils from realising their full their academic potential.
- Leaders have not acted to improve the quality of basic literacy skills of staff and pupils, and they continue to measure the performance of the school against other schools locally rather than nationally. This, in part, is why leaders have an inflated view of how much the school has improved.
- Leaders are not always sure about what impact their actions are having on school improvement if it cannot be evidenced by the school's data system. For example, staff say that the training they receive is improving their teaching but they, and leaders, are not always able to illustrate how.
- Leaders are able to articulate what will improve teaching but this has not been introduced into the everyday practice of all staff.
- Leaders have ensured that pupils are given appropriate advice and guidance about the next steps in their education. However, the pupils with whom inspectors spoke have varying views on how useful this advice and guidance are.
- The leadership of special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities ensures that these pupils receive a good experience at the school. Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities typically make good progress.
- Leaders have ensured that disadvantaged pupils have a champion for their cause at leadership level. This group of pupils have a much better quality of education at the school than they did in the past. However, the tracking of the attendance, behaviour and progress of these pupils is not rigorous enough. This group of pupils do not achieve as well as other pupils nationally and too many are persistently absent from school.

Governance of the school

- The trust has established clear lines of accountability and it has delegated responsibility

for school improvement to the local governing body. This has eliminated any misunderstanding and ensured that governors have a clear appreciation of their roles.

- The local governing body has a range of expertise and skills. Governors are open to listening and are reflective about their own effectiveness. Where they need to improve, they are proactive in undertaking training and support.
- The local governing body challenges the information which leaders provide. This information has not always been accurate but governors have acted on it in good faith.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The safeguarding team has effective systems and procedures in place, which have helped to provide a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. Training and maintenance of records are of high quality.
- Pupils and staff all know what they are to do and who to speak to if they have any concerns or worries. Pupils say that they feel safe at school. The pupils are very well supported in this regard. Where there are concerns, early help is timely and effective. The school works well with external agencies and parents and carers where appropriate.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of have improved. The introduction of the 'QKS standards' established a starting point for what all staff and pupils are to adhere to. However, not all pupils and staff follow them consistently well. As a result, the quality of teaching across different subjects is variable.
- Teaching is very focused on skills and not enough on knowledge and understanding. The emphasis on examination specifications distracts teachers from deepening pupils' learning. Teachers often revisit previous learning as something new, rather than embedding what pupils already know. This sometimes makes the learning of pupils superficial.
- Teachers ask questions of pupils which challenge them and make them think about the specific topic that they are studying. However, the questions do not require pupils to make links in their learning to consolidate their understanding.
- Leaders and teachers pay too much attention to end-of-unit tests rather than assessing the quality of pupils' learning that is taking place over time. This leads to misconceptions in pupils' learning not being identified early enough.
- Teachers of subjects other than English do not routinely demonstrate the skills to correct pupils when they make mistakes in basic literacy in a range of different subjects.
- Pupils' learning is good when teachers use the QKS standards effectively. Teachers deepen pupils' knowledge, vary their strategies to meet the needs of pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and impart a passion and love for their subjects.

- Where pupils' progress is the strongest, pupils are inquisitive and discuss what they are learning by drawing upon what they already know. For example, teaching is very effective in religious studies and sometimes there are aspects of strong teaching in mathematics and history.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils embody the school's motto, 'proud to belong'. However, while pupils are proud of their school, they do not take great pride in their work. The standard of work in some books started off well at the beginning of the year but now has become untidy.
- Pupils have good relationships with each other and with adults who work at the school. Pupils act responsibly and they are incredibly articulate.
- Leaders are attentive to the well-being of pupils, listen to their views and involve them in seeking ways to develop the school community. Leaders are particularly mindful of pupils' mental health and well-being, and a number of staff are mental health first aiders.
- Any incidents of bullying or discrimination are dealt with effectively. For example, an inspector was told by a pupil that it was 'more of an issue to come out as homophobic rather than as gay' at the school.
- Pupils who attend alternative provision have good attendance and their behaviour and learning show signs of improvement. Leaders work well and often with these providers.
- Pupils receive appropriate careers education, information, advice and guidance. However, some pupils who spoke to inspectors did not always find them helpful. Representatives from a range of colleges and universities come into school to talk to pupils about apprenticeships and vocational and academic courses.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Attendance is improving slowly but leaders have not built up the necessary momentum to ensure that the overall attendance rate is at or above the national average. The responsibility for this sits with too few members of staff.
- The proportion of pupils who regularly miss school continues to be above the national average, although it is much lower than at the time of the last inspection. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are regularly absent is stubbornly high, with little sign of improvement. Leaders' actions have not been successful in tackling this issue.
- Behaviour in and around the school is positive. Pupils are genial and show exemplary manners. Their strong attitudes to learning underpin their good academic outcomes. The number of low-level behavioural incidents has significantly decreased and, while the proportion of fixed-term exclusions is much higher than the national average, it is

because of a small number of pupils whose behaviour regularly falls short of expectations.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils achieve much better than they previously did at the school. While their progress in some subjects was below national averages in 2017, it does show marked improvements. This positive picture is due to teachers' higher expectations, pupils' strong skills and knowledge when they enter the school and their willingness to work hard and try their best.
- In 2017, pupils made similar progress to that of their peers nationally across a range of subjects. Most-able pupils do better than their peers nationally.
- The improvements in some subjects are significant. For example pupils made, and continue to make, much better progress in mathematics and English.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils, although improved in 2017, were not as good as they should be. This issue is compounded by the very high proportion of disadvantaged pupils who were persistently absent from school. This continues to be the case and, currently, the progress that a number of these pupils make is hampered by poor attendance.
- Pupils currently at the school are making much better progress than at the time of the last inspection. There are still gaps in the learning of boys when compared to that of girls. Disadvantaged pupils still lag behind other pupils nationally with the same starting points, and there are still some subjects where pupils' progress is not improving as well as others.
- Nearly all pupils go on to some form of education, employment or training.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Students make good progress in the sixth form. Published data indicates that the school is in the top fifth of schools for progress from GCSE. However, a number of students entered the sixth form having underachieved at GCSE, so the picture is not quite as positive as it appears.
- Students are very loyal to the school and their teachers. They told inspectors that the sixth form is continually getting better. They feel safe and well supported.
- Students' attendance has improved significantly in the sixth form. Attendance is routinely monitored and promoted as essential for success.
- During this year, leaders have taken action to improve the quality of sixth-form provision. Consequently, leadership of the sixth form is viewed positively by students. However, there are aspects of leadership roles that are unclear. For example, it is not clear who has responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
- Retention rates from Year 12 into Year 13 have not been good. Leaders identify the lack of breadth in the curriculum as being the reason for this. Some students have been following inappropriate courses and they have found their studies too hard.

Leaders have taken action to widen the curriculum offer for the current Year 12.

- Students make good progress in their learning in most subjects. However, girls demonstrate more positive attitudes to learning than boys.
- Students told inspectors that teaching is much better in the sixth form than lower down the school. A typical comment was: 'We go into more depth in our studies and the teachers are more passionate about their subjects.'
- Leaders have improved the way that students are supported in relation to mental health issues. Students value this.
- Students are encouraged to be involved in the wider school community. For example, some students are 'academic buddies' for younger pupils. Students are provided with opportunities to take part in personalised work experience placements.
- Careers education, information, advice and guidance are delivered through the tutorial programme. Students who spoke with inspectors felt that the quality would be better if they were more personalised. A high proportion of students take up places at university when they leave the sixth form.

School details

Unique reference number	136526
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10043617

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Secondary comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,107
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	249
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Liz Moffatt
Headteacher	Jon Hayes
Telephone number	01539 743 900
Website	www.qks.org.uk
Email address	jon.hayes@queenkatherine.org
Date of previous inspection	7–8 December 2016

Information about this school

- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is growing. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than the national average. However, the proportion who have an education, health and care plan is above the national average.

- In 2017, the school met the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress at the end of Year 11.
- The school makes use of Switched2, Cumbria Hospital and Home Tuition Service and Kendal College to offer alternative provision for eight pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who enter the school with high prior attainment makes up almost half of each year group.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in a range of classrooms, sometimes jointly with senior leaders. They also spoke with pupils around the school, as well as holding discussions with three groups of pupils from across the school. Inspectors, jointly with middle leaders, scrutinised pupils' learning in their books.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the multi-academy trust, the chief executive officer, the chair and members of the local governing body, the headteacher, senior leaders and leaders of subjects and other aspects of the school's work. Inspectors took into account the 88 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The team considered a range of documentation related to the school's work.
- The team also used evidence from the two monitoring visits when reaching judgements.

Inspection team

Jonathan Jones, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rochelle Conefrey	Ofsted Inspector
David Hampson	Ofsted Inspector
Alyson Middlemass	Ofsted Inspector
Julie Bather	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Johnson	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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