

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School

West Park Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 6DF

Inspection dates: 25–26 September 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Sixth-form provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

Staff are ambitious for all pupils. Most pupils live up to these high expectations. They work hard in lessons and show commitment to becoming well-rounded individuals.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and wear their uniform with pride. They value the strong sense of community and feel a sense of belonging. Pupils feel safe and appreciate the support that they receive from staff. They told us that staff are friendly and approachable.

Pupils generally behave well in lessons and around the school site. Bullying is rare at the school. When it does happen, staff deal with it well. Pupils who join the school at different times are made to feel welcome. They settle quickly and adopt the 'QEGS way'.

Pupils show respect for each other. They appreciate what different religions and cultures have in common. They also value difference.

Pupils benefit from an exceptional range of opportunities beyond the formal curriculum. These experiences help pupils to grow as human beings. They also ensure that pupils leave the school with fond memories. Pupils leave Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School with an appreciation of what the world has to offer.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils study an exceptionally broad and ambitious curriculum. Since the last inspection, staff have considered the content of the curriculum deeply. Teachers from the primary phase now work closely with their secondary colleagues to carefully plan subject curriculums that run from the early years to the sixth form.

Most subject curriculums are now well planned. This helps pupils to know and remember more as they move through the school. Pupils are confident at recalling previously learned work and relating it to new learning. For example, I saw pupils in Year 9 applying their knowledge of the difference between weathering and erosion to their current work on rivers.

Despite this, some subjects are not as well planned as others. In particular, leaders are still focusing on the redesign of the English, mathematics and history curriculums. This is because these curriculums are not as ambitious and exciting as others. Pupils' learning in these subjects is not structured as well as elsewhere.

Pupils learn foreign languages very well from key stage 2 onwards. Pupils learn three different languages in Year 8. They study French or Spanish, as well as German and Latin.

Leaders have also prioritised pupils' learning in the humanities. In the secondary

phase, pupils' learning in history and geography is supported by their study of ethics and philosophy and classics. The school has made it compulsory to study at least one foreign language and humanities subject in key stage 4. This reflects the school's commitment to entering almost all pupils for the English Baccalaureate.

The school also promotes the arts. Pupils' learning in music and art is well planned. Teachers have high expectations for what pupils should know and be able to do in these subjects. For example, pupils in the primary phase learn about various artists from history, such as Salvador Dali. Pupils develop their skills and confidence in these subjects. As a result, the arts are growing in popularity. Over 70% of pupils currently in Year 9 have opted to study art, design technology or music at GCSE.

Pupils' achievement has improved significantly in all key stages since the last inspection. All measures of attainment now compare favourably to national averages, from the early years to the end of key stage 4. All measures of pupils' progress are now in line with national averages in both the primary and secondary phases, except for progress in mathematics in the secondary phase.

Reading is given a high priority in the school. Children begin to learn sounds as soon as they start in Reception. The books they read match the sounds that they are learning. They soon learn to read simple words and sentences. Training for teachers enables them to help pupils who fall behind in their reading. Pupils read with greater accuracy and fluency as they move through the primary phase. Pupils from Year 6 told an inspector how much they enjoy reading. They spoke with enthusiasm about their favourite authors and genres.

In the early years, children settle quickly into the nurturing environment created by leaders. Teachers use careful assessment to judge what children know, understand and can do. Teachers use this information to identify what children need to do next. Teachers develop children's early mathematics, language and communication skills effectively. Children take part in activities that develop their understanding of the world. Most children reach a good level of development by the end of Reception. This helps ensure they are well prepared for Year 1.

The sixth form offers students the opportunity to select from a wide range of academic subjects. The majority of students go to university after completing their programmes of study. Students' progress on A-level courses has varied considerably over the last few years. Achievement has been weak in some subjects. However, there are clear signs that students are achieving better than in the past. This is because teachers have given more thought to the content of their curriculums. They have also improved their teaching. Students are articulate, well-mannered and mature. They benefit from a well-planned range of opportunities beyond their academic studies.

Pupils benefit from a stunning range of opportunities to enhance their personal development. The school's sporting offer is broad and inclusive. During the inspection, pupils were told that the school has been invited to Lords as a recognition for its commitment to cricket. All pupils from Years 1–9 have regular

swimming lessons. Staff think carefully about how to involve all pupils in extra-curricular sport and other activities. Pupils benefit from many opportunities to develop their leadership skills. For example, pupils can become prefects or join the school council. The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum is exemplary. It addresses important issues, such as suicide and body image, in a sensitive and age-appropriate way.

Leaders act with integrity. They have the same high academic expectations of all pupils, including disadvantaged pupils and/or pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). They ensure that these pupils have the same opportunities as everyone else. The actions that they take are always in pupils' best interests. Leaders and governors have played a key role in improving the school since the last inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders have created a positive safeguarding culture. Staff are alert to any signs of abuse or neglect. They understand the safeguarding risks that are possibly more prevalent within the school's context.

Staff and governors are well trained on matters relating to pupils' safety. Pupils benefit from a wealth of age-appropriate information related to different dangers. This helps them to manage risk and act sensibly, including when online.

Vulnerable pupils are supported well. Their needs are identified quickly through the school's systems. These pupils are then provided with appropriate help. The school works well with a range of external agencies.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The teaching of almost all subjects has improved significantly since the last inspection. This is reflected in the improving outcomes at all levels throughout the school. Despite this, some subjects are more developed than others. In particular, English, mathematics and history are still undergoing significant development. It is evident from leaders' actions that the weaknesses in the design and delivery of these subject curriculums are being addressed.
- However, to ensure that leaders' actions have the intended impact, they must ensure that teachers give enough thought to what they want pupils to achieve through their curriculums. They need to make sure that these curriculums reflect the same level of ambition seen in other subjects. They also need to ensure that staff receive the ongoing subject-specific training and support to help them sequence and deliver their curriculums in a way that leads to pupils learning well over time.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141165
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10110914
Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,202
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	133
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Mr David Peat
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Gammon
Website	www.qegsblackburn.com
Date of previous inspection	17–18 March 2017

Information about this school

- The school converted from an independent day school to an academy free school in September 2014. Since then, the number of pupils on roll has grown significantly.
- The school uses no alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- During the inspection, we spoke formally with pupils about their work and school life. We also spoke with pupils during lessons and around the school site. Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, governors and teachers, including those who are new to the profession.
- We reviewed documentation, which included leaders' evaluation of the school's

strengths and areas for improvement, and the school development plan. Information regarding attendance and behaviour was also looked at.

- We considered the views expressed by parents in the 72 responses to Ofsted’s survey, Parent View, as well as comments received via the text facility on Parent View. We considered the 229 responses to the questionnaire for pupils and the 67 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection focused deeply on mathematics, art, history, science and reading. In these subjects, we met with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, met with teaching staff and looked at pupils’ work. Other subjects were also considered as part of the inspection.
- We reviewed a range of documentation about safeguarding, including the school’s record of checks undertaken on newly appointed staff.

Inspection team

Will Smith, lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
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Julie Bather	Ofsted Inspector
Kathleen McArthur	Ofsted Inspector
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