

Inspection of Queen Mary's High School

Upper Forster Street, Walsall, West Midlands WS4 2AE

Inspection dates: 12 and 13 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Sixth-form provision

Outstanding

Previous inspection grade

Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils know, from the moment they walk through the gates, that the highest standards of work and behaviour will be expected from them. They also know that they will be well supported in reaching those standards. There are warm relationships between staff and pupils and wide-ranging support services. Pupils are happy at school, enjoy their learning and achieve exceptionally well.

Lessons are challenging. Teachers expect pupils to understand and use precise subject language. The curriculum is wide and varied. For example, pupils have the opportunity to learn Mandarin, alongside a range of European languages. All pupils in Year 7 learn to play an instrument to make sure that their musical understanding is deeply rooted in practical experience. There are numerous opportunities to participate in clubs and activities, and the great majority of pupils take part.

Behaviour is exemplary. In lessons and around the school, there is a calm and orderly environment. Pupils are courteous and helpful. They are respectful of their staff and their peers. Many older students, especially those in the sixth form, take on leadership roles within the school to support this culture. Pupils feel safe at school.

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

School leaders have the highest ambition for the success of every pupil. They have designed a curriculum that enables pupils to study subjects in great depth, promoting knowledge and understanding that exceeds the expectations of the national curriculum. In key stages 4 and 5, the planned curriculum prepares them exceptionally well for their future lives, including examinations.

Heads of department are enthusiastic and passionate about their subjects. They have produced detailed plans for learning, building knowledge in small steps. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use it to ask sharp, focused questions that deepen pupils' understanding of their subject. There are excellent resources in all subject areas and individualised help for pupils who need it.

Teachers carefully check that pupils understand the work they do in lessons. Pupils are confident to ask for help or more clarification when they need it. Teachers are adept at revisiting earlier learning if they find that pupils are unclear about anything. Teachers of Years 12 and 13 have developed strategies to check in precise detail what pupils have misunderstood in their learning. Formal subject tests take place each term to check that pupils are remembering their learning over a longer period.

Leaders are committed to developing a love of reading in all pupils. The library is a thriving hub throughout the day. Pupils are well supported in selecting books that are appropriate to their age, interests, and ability. As a result, they are confident, fluent readers who demonstrate a real enjoyment of reading.

Pupils achieve exceptionally well across the whole curriculum. Most are highly effective independent learners. They organise their work well and engage enthusiastically in lessons. Pupils who fall behind in their learning are supported by a strong pastoral structure that offers help to address concerns and build resilience.

The special educational needs coordinator ensures that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) have individualised plans to help them access the whole curriculum and achieve very well. There is a focus on empowering pupils with SEND to understand their own learning needs. This is helping them to develop coping strategies that will support them into adulthood.

The curriculum extends well beyond the academic. It provides exceptional opportunities for pupils' broader development. The school promotes diversity and equality very effectively. There is a weekly personal development lesson that includes information on supporting pupils' mental health, keeping safe online and maintaining healthy lifestyles and relationships. There is an extensive offer of clubs and activities, frequently initiated by pupils, from the Lovelace Coding Club to the Cultural Awareness Society. Pupils are keen to participate, and the school endeavours to ensure that disadvantaged pupils and those with SEND are encouraged to attend.

Careers guidance is highly valued and pupils in all key stages receive information about a wide range of possible career pathways. There are many high-quality, meaningful opportunities to engage with the world of work.

Staff feel supported and treated with respect. They enjoy working at the school and value the support for their well-being.

Trustees and governors are confident about their roles and the division of duties. They share the school's commitment to the highest ambition for all pupils and have effective systems in place to check the quality of the school's work. They are committed to becoming a more inclusive school by increasing access for disadvantaged pupils. They have changed the school's admission criteria to support this and run an intensive outreach programme across Walsall primary schools.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The school takes its responsibility to keep pupils safe very seriously. Detailed records are kept of any concerns and the school makes good use of external agencies when appropriate. The school is increasingly proactive in working with pupils to develop strategies to prevent concerns arising.

Pupils value the support they receive, commenting on the openness and helpfulness of staff, including counsellors. Pupils report that bullying is not an issue, and that they feel very safe in school. Pupils have good opportunities to discuss relevant issues like sexual harassment and know how to keep safe, both in and out of school.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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	136777
Local authority	Walsall
Inspection number	10199398
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	846
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	204
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Kevin Davis
Headteacher	Dr Alison Bruton
Website	http://www.qmhs.org.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Queen Mary's High School converted to become an academy in February 2012. It became a founding member of The Mercian Trust in 2018.
- The school does not make use of any alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the Baker Clause, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- The lead inspector met virtually with representatives of those responsible for governance. Inspectors met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. The lead inspector also met representatives of The Mercian Trust.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, modern foreign languages, art, music and history. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans and visited a sample of lessons. Inspectors met with teachers and spoke with pupils about their learning. Inspectors also scrutinised samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors visited lessons in other subjects and reviewed pupils' work in those lessons. Inspectors spoke with leaders and teachers in other subjects and to staff working in pastoral roles. Inspectors spoke with pupils about their wider development and other aspects of school life.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of safeguarding documentation, including the school's single central record. They scrutinised other documentation, including leaders' records of attendance, behaviour and bullying.
- Inspectors considered responses to the online questionnaire, Ofsted Parent View, and the responses to Ofsted's pupil and staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Deborah James, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Adele Mills	Ofsted Inspector
Sara Arkle	Ofsted Inspector
Steve Byatt	Ofsted Inspector

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