

Inspection of Queensmill School

1 Askham Road, Shepherds Bush, London W12 0NW

Inspection dates: 16 and 17 November 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected

Ofsted has not previously inspected Queensmill School under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. However, Ofsted previously judged Queensmill School to be outstanding, before it opened as an academy. From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between inspections.

Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened in Queensmill School's effectiveness before and after it converted to academy status.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders are not robust enough in their approach to making sure that pupils are safe from potential harm. They have not followed statutory guidance for checking the suitability of staff. Leaders have not ensured that all staff know and understand the government's latest safeguarding guidance. Leaders do not routinely ensure that procedures are followed for administering pupils' medication. This puts pupils at risk.

Staff use a variety of approaches to help pupils calm down when they are feeling anxious or upset. Pupils behave well and enjoy interacting with staff who know them well. Staff deal effectively with any incidents, including bullying.

Leaders have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in their learning. Staff provide pupils with many positive experiences outside the classroom. These opportunities help to prepare pupils for independent living. Pupils go on shopping trips and on visits to the library, theatres and art galleries. Sixth-form students have opportunities for work experience. Some take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award activities. The personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme helps pupils to gain an age-appropriate understanding of how to form healthy relationships.

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

Leaders, including trustees, have not ensured that safeguarding is effective.

The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Typically, pupils have significant cognitive, communication, sensory and social impairment difficulties. Leaders strive to prepare pupils for meaningful independent lives beyond school. They want pupils to function well in society.

Staff work together to understand each pupil's educational and therapeutic needs. They use assessment effectively to identify pupils' starting points in different subjects. Staff use assessment information well to construct bespoke plans for pupils based on the curriculum. These plans define the strategies for learning, support and the therapies pupils need. Most subjects are well planned. However, in a few subjects, plans do not clearly identify what pupils need to know and in what order. Leaders have started to refine these plans but have not yet completed this work.

Teachers break down what pupils need to learn into small, manageable chunks. Teachers link pupils' learning to everyday situations. For example, pupils are encouraged to use their mathematics knowledge when shopping. In the sixth form, students build on their learning from Year 11 to study functional mathematics and functional English. They can also study other accredited courses. These cover themes such as employment, independent living, health, community and leisure.

Staff make the most of opportunities to promote pupils' language and communication development. They have a secure understanding of how pupils' language develops. Leaders make sure that pupils have the things they need to communicate effectively. These include signs, pictures and word cards. Teachers use whatever strategies work best to support each pupil's language and communication. From the early years, staff read stories to pupils. In doing so, they choose suitable props and sensory resources to increase pupils' engagement and their enjoyment of books. Staff use an effective programme to help the small number of pupils who are at the stage of learning to read using phonics.

Pupils enjoy lessons. They learn to work in groups and to concentrate for increasing periods. Staff build pupils' ability to share, wait, take turns and express themselves. When pupils find it hard to manage their feelings or emotions, staff are quick to help them. However, leaders' record-keeping of behaviour incidents lacks rigour. Weaknesses in record-keeping, including those related to physical intervention, prevent leaders from spotting patterns in pupils' behaviour over time. This means leaders do not have all the information they need to support staff in meeting pupils' needs.

Pupils benefit from a range of activities beyond the classroom. These make a strong contribution to their personal development. Pupils learn about important events and cultural celebrations, such as Remembrance Day and Diwali. Pupils have the opportunity to work with a specialist theatre company. This work is specifically designed for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. Staff use a bespoke programme to teach pupils about risks and how to stay safe. Pupils have opportunities to volunteer in the community. For example, they do gardening at a mansion house trust. Sixth-form students enjoy a range of work experience opportunities, including working in a shop that upcycles furniture. As a result of staffing difficulties, some enrichment activities have not taken place regularly over several months. These activities are now restarting.

Staff said that leaders help them to have a reasonable workload. Leaders look after staff welfare. For example, staff have access to mental health first aiders.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Recruitment processes for vetting candidates' suitability to work with children are weak. Leaders have not ensured that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and references have been completed for all new members of staff. Leaders have not complied with the statutory requirements for schools to obtain a separate barred list check if a member of staff works with children before a DBS certificate is available. Leaders were not aware of this legal requirement. They did not know how to carry out the check until inspectors told them.

Leaders have not ensured that all staff, particularly those who are new to the school, have read and understood the school's procedures for keeping pupils safe. Leaders

provide staff with a range of safeguarding training. At the start of this academic year, leaders asked staff to complete an online training update on the latest statutory guidance. However, leaders have not checked that staff have completed and understood this training.

Leaders discuss with staff any concerns they have about pupils' welfare. However, these discussions and leaders' follow-up actions are not all recorded. This means leaders do not build a full picture over time of a pupil's needs. This limits leaders from being able to arrange extra support that pupils might need.

Despite having clear plans and detailed information about pupils' medical needs, leaders do not have effective oversight of what actually happens in practice. For example, leaders expect pupils to be able to have ready access to their medication, irrespective of where they are in the school building. However, leaders do not make sure that staff understand and follow these procedures consistently. This represents a risk to pupils' welfare. Leaders do not have a clear picture of when pupils have taken their medication. This is because they do not ensure that records are kept up to date and completed in a timely fashion. This could lead to confusion and pupils not getting the correct amount of medication. Leaders have not ensured that new staff have had the training they need to administer pupils' medication. Some staff administer medication without being trained to do so.

Leaders generally know pupils well. They have established links with external agencies to support pupils and families.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders do not follow statutory requirements when appointing new staff. They should make sure that those responsible for recruiting staff undertake appropriate training. Leaders must ensure that they know and implement the statutory guidance for safer recruitment.
- Leaders have not ensured that all staff are trained in the government's latest statutory safeguarding guidance. As a matter of urgency, leaders should ensure that all staff undertake the necessary training.
- Record-keeping systems are weak. Changes in pupils' behaviour, or other concerns deemed to be minor, are not recorded. Records of when staff have needed to use physical intervention lack rigour. Overall, this limits leaders' oversight of information and emerging patterns that could help to identify any pupils who may be at risk from harm. Leaders should improve their methods of recording and analysing information on all behaviour incidents, potential safeguarding concerns and the use of physical intervention. They should use the information to review and evaluate their work.
- Policies and procedures for the administration of medication are not working well enough in practice. Some staff have not been trained in the school's procedures

and record-keeping is not always up to date or accurate. For example, leaders expect pupils to have ready access to their medication if they are learning outside of their usual classroom. This does not always happen in practice. Leaders need to review the procedures and expectations for logging the administration of medication. They should check that staff understand and follow these consistently.

- In a few subjects, leaders have not ensured that the curriculum is coherent and well sequenced. However, it is clear from the actions that leaders have already taken that the curriculum is improving quickly and that leaders are bringing about the necessary changes. There is expertise in the school that subject leaders can draw upon to build on their planning for next year's curriculum. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied. Leaders should ensure that every subject is planned logically and adapted to meet pupils' needs. Leaders should identify exactly what they want pupils to know and remember.

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	147793
Local authority	Hammersmith & Fulham
Inspection number	10202954
Type of school	All-through special
School category	Academy special converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	249
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	19
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Greatorex
Headteacher	Aymeline Bel
Website	www.queensmillschool.com
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Queensmill School converted to become an academy school in June 2021. When its predecessor school, Queensmill School, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be outstanding overall.
- The school caters for pupils with autism spectrum disorder. All pupils who attend the school have an education, health and care plan.
- The main site in Askham Road provides education for pupils aged 3 to 19 years.
- The school's registered provision for adults in the age range of 19 to 25 is located in Queensmill College, Goldhawk Road, Shepherds Bush.
- The school, under its registration, runs special autism spectrum disorder resource bases at Fulham Primary School, Halford Road, Fulham and at Fulham College Boys' School.

- As of September 2021, Queensmill School sponsored the opening of Kensington Queensmill, an 80-place special school in Kensington and Chelsea. Many of the school's staff, including some leaders, moved to work in this new provision.
- School leaders do not make use of any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspectors deemed the inspection a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, language and communication, which included early reading, and PSHE. These deep dives involved discussions with leaders and teachers, visits to lessons, looking at examples of pupils' work and discussions with pupils. Inspectors also considered other subjects as part of the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with the chair of trustees and four other members of the trust. Inspectors spoke with members of the local governing body. They spoke with the headteachers of the schools where this school provides specialist resource bases. The inspection team spoke with the executive headteacher, who is also the trust's chief operating officer, and with the head of school and other leaders and school staff.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documents, including records related to safeguarding and the checks carried out before the appointment of staff. Inspectors also looked at records of pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- There are too few children in the early years foundation stage to be able to report on without identifying individuals.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Teresa Neary	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah Murphy	Her Majesty's Inspector

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