

Inspection of The Queen Elizabeth's High School, Gainsborough

Morton Terrace, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire DN21 2ST

Inspection dates: 13 and 14 December 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Sixth-form provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a school where expectations of what pupils can achieve are high. Most pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), thrive on this challenge. They attend school well, enjoy learning and are successful in their academic studies.

Pupils' interactions with their peers and with staff are positive and productive. They get on well together and enjoy each other's company. Pupils respond well to praise and enjoy being rewarded with positive praise points for their work. Learning in lessons is rarely delayed by distractions, although pupils occasionally lack focus. When pupils struggle to behave as they should, they say staff respond fairly and consistently.

Pupils benefit from a rich educational experience. They take part in an extensive range of diverse activities, including a wide variety of trips and visits, extra-curricular clubs and house competitions. Pupils take on leadership roles, for instance as subject ambassadors, mentors, 'youth stars' or form captains. This wealth of opportunities builds pupils' confidence, develops their character and broadens their horizons.

Most parents are very positive about their children's experiences at the school. As one parent typically explained, 'I appreciate how staff are interested in the children, their progress and their hopes for the future.'

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

A considerable amount of work has taken place since the previous inspection to improve the school for the benefit of all pupils. Key priorities have been acted on quickly to resolve the issues identified. A robust system of checks means that the school knows what is working and what needs to be strengthened. The leadership team is determined that the school will continue to get better.

The school's curriculum offer is ambitious. Pupils in key stage 3, including pupils with SEND, study a broad range of subjects. At key stage 4, most pupils fulfil the requirements of the English Baccalaureate. In the sixth form, the school has recently added economics to the variety of subjects that students can study. At each stage, the curriculum provides pupils with a well-rounded experience that prepares them well for their next steps.

The curriculum in each subject has been reviewed to make sure that it is clear what pupils need to know and when. In many subjects, precise curriculum content has been identified. Links between important ideas show how pupils can develop increasingly complex levels of understanding. In a few subjects, the school is still identifying exactly what pupils need to learn and in what order.

Most teachers make good use of their specialist knowledge. They choose appropriate ways to teach pupils new ideas and skills. This is particularly the case in the sixth form. Most teachers devise useful activities to help pupils remember key information. Teachers ask pertinent questions to check pupils' knowledge and correct any misunderstandings. Pupils, particularly students in the sixth form, benefit from the help they get to improve their work and to learn independently.

Occasionally, the curriculum is not implemented well enough. In these cases, teachers sometimes miss chances to deepen pupils' understanding or plug gaps in pupils' knowledge. When these things happen, pupils do not achieve as well as they should.

The provision for pupils with SEND has improved. Many of these pupils benefit from a personalised approach that is focused on their particular needs. Better communication keeps parents of children with SEND well informed about how their children are getting on.

There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to read. Pupils choose their own reading books from the school's well-resourced library. A small number of pupils get extra help to improve their reading comprehension.

Pupils appreciate why good behaviour matters. They understand the school's 'warn, move, remove' behaviour system. However, some staff do not feel well supported when managing incidents of poor behaviour. The school's tenacious approach to improving attendance has paid off. Most pupils attend school very well.

The personal development programme is comprehensive. Pupils understand how to look after their physical and mental health and learn how to keep themselves safe. Their knowledge of different faiths and cultures is enhanced through links with schools in Tanzania and China. Pupils learn about different career pathways and professions. For example, Year 10 pupils demonstrate their skills setting up their own businesses during the school's 'enterprise fair'. Recent changes mean that post-16 students receive clear guidance about the different routes they can follow when they leave school. However, too few of these students have the opportunity to take part in work experience.

Many staff enjoy working at the school. They value the many opportunities to improve their professional practice. Most staff agree that the school has improved since the previous inspection. However, a minority of staff do not think that the school is considerate enough of their workload or their well-being.

Recent appointments to the governing body have provided stability after a period of change. Governors are knowledgeable about leaders' work to improve the school. However, some of them have not had sufficient time in role to fully understand their responsibilities. The local authority has worked closely with the school's leadership team to identify key priorities and evaluate the impact of the team's actions to improve the school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The curriculum is well planned and implemented in many subjects. However, there are some inconsistencies. In a few subjects, not enough thought has been given to exactly what pupils need to learn. There are also some variations in how effectively the curriculum is delivered, both within and across subjects. These differences in intent and implementation mean that pupils cannot always recall key subject knowledge as well as they should. The school needs to ensure that the curriculum is planned carefully and taught consistently in every subject.
- Many staff are supportive of the changes needed to improve the school. However, a minority of staff do not think that the school has given sufficient consideration to the impact of these changes on their workload or well-being. These staff do not feel well motivated or supported in their roles. The school must ensure that any changes necessary to improve the school are communicated effectively so that all staff understand why these changes are needed and feel supported when implementing them.
- Changes to the school's governance arrangements mean that some governors have taken on new roles very recently. These governors are still learning about their responsibilities to oversee key aspects of the school. Those responsible for governance need to make sure that they have the knowledge and skills they need to carry out their roles, so that they can provide leaders with the necessary support and appropriate challenge.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	120655
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10298428
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,171
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	240
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jodi Daubney (Acting Chair)
Headteacher	Richard Eastham
Website	www.qehs.lincs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	28 and 29 September 2021, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a significant number of new leaders have been appointed, including a new deputy headteacher and two new assistant headteachers, one of whom is responsible for the sixth-form provision.
- The acting chair and the acting vice-chair of the governing body took up their temporary positions in November 2023. A new chair of governors has been appointed to take up the permanent position from January 2024.
- The school uses the services of one registered alternative provision and one unregistered alternative provision.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information and engagement about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Information about this inspection

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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and with other school leaders.
- The lead inspector met with four governors, including the acting chair and the acting vice-chair of the governing body. The new chair of governors, due to take up the post in January 2024, also attended the meeting.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative of the local authority on the telephone.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into the following subjects: mathematics, history, design and technology, religious education and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders to discuss the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons and considered pupils' work. Inspectors spoke with teachers and pupils. On the second day of the inspection, inspectors examined the curriculum in a wider range of subjects.
- Inspectors met with groups of pupils from a range of different year groups, including sixth-form students and pupils with SEND. Inspectors spoke with pupils informally and observed the behaviour of pupils during social times.
- Inspectors visited some tutor sessions and attended an assembly.
- An inspector spoke on the telephone with a representative of the alternative provisions used by the school.
- Inspectors evaluated the effectiveness of safeguarding arrangements by reviewing the school's record of pre-employment checks, holding discussions with safeguarding leaders, staff and pupils and reviewing documentation relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took note of the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and to Ofsted's staff and pupil surveys.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans. They considered information about pupils' attendance, behaviour and suspensions and the wider curriculum.

Inspection team

Rachel Tordoff, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
John Morrison	Ofsted Inspector
Julie McBrearty	Ofsted Inspector
Debbie Ridley	Ofsted Inspector
Ian McNeilly	Ofsted Inspector
John Spragg	His Majesty's Inspector

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