

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's School

Blandford Road, Pamphill, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 4DT

Inspection dates: 3 and 4 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Sixth-form provision

Good

Previous inspection grade

Good

The headteacher of this school is Simon Firth. This school is part of the Initio Learning Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Elizabeth West, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by John Kingston.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are safe and conduct themselves well around the school. The school has high expectations of how pupils behave towards each other and staff. Most pupils live up to these. However, in many subjects in key stages 3 and 4, the expectations of what pupils learn are too low. When this is the case, some attitudes to learning are not positive. This is reflected in the quality of pupils' work and the pride they take in it. For example, many pupils do not take care to write accurately and in depth.

Pupils and sixth-form students benefit from useful advice about their next steps. They value the annual careers fair and work experience opportunities, for example. The school encourages pupils to respect people from other backgrounds and to treat everyone equally. Pupils know the school's vision of a commitment to hope.

Many pupils take part in wider opportunities, such as sports and performing in the school musical. For example, pupils speak excitedly about the 'Achievement, Confidence and Enjoyment' festival at the end of each academic year. They compete in their 'houses' and participate in charity events. Some sixth-form students develop their leadership skills by becoming mentors for younger pupils, while others take on roles as 'Team QE' leaders.

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

Most pupils follow a broad range of subjects. Sixth-form students have study programmes that meet their individual needs and aspirations. However, the curriculum in many subjects does not make clear the most important knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn. Moreover, the way in which the curriculum is taught does not support pupils to build their learning securely on what they already know and can do. As a result, many pupils lack depth in their subject knowledge and skills. Teachers' use of assessment does not consistently identify where pupils have gaps in their learning, and so misconceptions persist.

Where the curriculum is stronger, teachers have the subject knowledge they need to teach the curriculum effectively. In the sixth form, teaching helps students to use subject-specific academic and technical vocabulary. Where teaching is well designed, pupils remember what they have learned. In some subjects, teaching uses assessment effectively to identify and correct pupils' misconceptions.

The school identifies accurately the needs of most pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the curriculum is not always adapted to best meet these needs.

The vast majority of pupils are fluent readers when they join the school. However, the school does not develop pupils' confidence in reading or their enjoyment of it. The school has taken steps in this area, such as choosing some high-quality texts for pupils to read. Sixth-form students read texts that complement their studies. Nonetheless, this work is in its infancy.

Pupils are polite and punctual. They follow routines well, so the school has a calm and orderly atmosphere. The school has introduced strategies to promote better attendance for pupils and sixth-form students. It has identified the causes of absence, and its work is beginning to have an impact on improving how regularly pupils attend.

The personal, social and health education curriculum is appropriate for each year group. Pupils and sixth-form students discuss sensitive topics in a respectful and considered way. For instance, they learn about healthy relationships and the importance of tolerance. Pupils of all ages learn how to keep themselves safe when online and how to look after their mental and physical well-being.

Pupils and sixth-form students receive useful, unbiased Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CIEAG). This includes information about higher and technical education and apprenticeships. The school evaluates its CIEAG programme carefully and makes improvements when required.

The school has a programme of activities to develop pupils' talents and interests. For example, there are clubs for drama, photography and jazz. Some pupils and sixth-form students appreciate and make good use of these.

Trustees and local governors ensure that the school fulfils its statutory duties. However, they do not hold the school strongly to account for the quality of education that pupils receive. In many aspects of the school's work, improvement has not happened securely or quickly enough. Many parents say their concerns are not dealt with properly.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, assessment is not used effectively. This is because the school has not identified precisely the most important knowledge and skills pupils should learn. Teaching does not check pupils have understood before introducing new content. Consequently, pupils lack depth in their subject knowledge. The trust must ensure that each subject curriculum sets out precisely what pupils should learn and by when.
- The school does not have high enough expectations of how well pupils read and write. The curriculum does not enrich pupils' reading, which hinders their development of vocabulary and understanding of the curriculum. Pupils do not write in sufficient depth. Sometimes they write with inaccurate spelling and punctuation. The trust must ensure that the curriculum enhances pupils' reading and improves the quality and accuracy of pupils' writing.

- The school does not evaluate the impact of its work well enough. Trustees sometimes do not have the information they need to hold the school strongly to account. As a result, improvements are not made quickly or securely enough. The trust must ensure there is strong oversight in all areas of the school's work so that improvements are made and sustained.

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	141526
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10267015
Type of school	Secondary Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	13 to 18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,564
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	399
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	John Kingston
CEO of the trust	Elizabeth West
Headteacher	Simon Firth
Website	www.queenelizabeths.com
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school is a Church of England School in the Diocese of Salisbury. The school received its last section 48 inspection in June 2018.
- The school is part of the Initio Learning Trust multi-academy trust.
- The school uses one registered and two unregistered alternative providers.
- 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.
- This was the first inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Very occasionally, Ofsted's quality assurance process may suggest gaps in the inspection evidence base, which will cause Ofsted to conclude that the inspection is incomplete. This happened at Queen Elizabeth's School. Two of His Majesty's Inspectors returned to the school on 23 November 2023 to gather additional information to secure the evidence base. In such cases, the inspection report is not published until Ofsted is satisfied that the inspection is secure.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: English, mathematics, history, modern foreign languages, psychology and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, looked at curriculum planning, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, spoke with some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

James Oldham, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Kathy Maddocks	Ofsted Inspector
Alun Williams	Ofsted Inspector
John Weeds	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Collins	Ofsted Inspector
Victoria Griffin	His Majesty's Inspector
Tracey Reynolds	His Majesty's Inspector

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