

# Inspection of a good school: Queen's Croft High School

Birmingham Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6PJ

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Inspection dates:

21 and 22 February 2024

## Outcome

Queen's Croft High School continues to be a good school.

The headteachers of this school are Ms Letitia Carter and Mr Sam Wood. This school is part of Primitas Learning Partnership, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Mark Maydew, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jason Marsden.

## What is it like to attend this school?

This is a rapidly improving school. Staff are caring and compassionate. Prior to joining Queens Croft, many pupils have not had a positive experience of school. Leaders understand this and are committed to changing this situation for pupils. Increasingly, and over time, pupils develop into confident and resilient young people, who are suitably prepared for life after school.

Recently, leaders have begun to pay closer attention to pupils' individual needs and build a coherent picture of the help and support pupils need to be successful. Staff use this knowledge to good effect to meet pupils' academic and therapeutic needs.

Pupils behave well in lessons. Most clearly embody the school values of kindness, engagement, resilience and courage. They build strong relationships with staff and with their peers. A comment from one pupil echoes the views of many: 'I make good friends here.' Leaders have worked hard to nurture these bonds since their appointment. Pupils feel safe here and most attend often.

Leaders are developing an ambitious curriculum. Pupils take part in a wide range of activities, such as community Makaton performances and enterprise activities. These opportunities help pupils to develop their communication and language skills, while also pushing the boundaries of pupils' comfort zones in a safe and supportive way.

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

The co-headteachers, supported by their leadership team, are steering the school through a period of significant instability. They are taking the right steps, in the right order, to

secure improvement across the school. Staff are committed to the headteachers' ambitious vision. They share a clear sense of pride in being part of the community that leaders have been careful to restore. At times in the past, the relationship between some parents and the school broke down. Leaders are rightly continuing their work to re-engage all parents and rebuild trust between all parties.

Upon their appointment, leaders quickly identified weaknesses within the provision for pupils who struggle to read. They have rejuvenated the school's approach to phonics. The new phonics curriculum is well planned and well suited to the individual needs of pupils. Staff deliver the curriculum with precision. Pupils make sound progress and are now learning to read in a timely manner. This work is helping to drive the growing positive culture of reading at the school.

Leaders are in the process of redeveloping the school's curriculum. They have begun to set out the knowledge that pupils need to learn so that they can be successful across each subject. This work is well developed across most subjects, and the knowledge pupils encounter builds on the things they already know. This helps pupils, including those in the sixth form, to make sound progress. However, across other subjects this work is not yet well developed. Additionally, some teachers lack the subject knowledge needed to deliver the curriculum well. Occasionally, the activities chosen by teachers do not support pupils to learn the intended knowledge. This holds pupils back. Leaders recognise these shortcomings and are taking appropriate steps at the right pace to develop this further.

All students who attend the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Leaders have worked smartly to revitalise their approach to supporting pupils' special educational needs and or/disabilities (SEND). Leaders now work in partnership with a range of external agencies to carefully assess and understand the increasingly broad range of needs of pupils who join the school. Consequently, over time, pupils make sound progress towards their individual educational and health goals.

Many pupils at the school have previously struggled to manage their own behaviour. The school makes good use of restorative conversations to help pupils learn how to manage their emotions more effectively, and to rebuild relationships when these break down. Leaders carefully monitor incidents of poor behaviour and provide effective targeted support to those who need it. Consequently, behaviour across the school has improved a great deal and is largely settled.

The school makes sure that students benefit from a range of encounters with the world of work. However, the range of experiences offered to students is not always well matched to pupils' career aspirations. Where this happens, pupils' horizons are narrowed.

Leaders' work to promote pupils' independence is a strength of the school. There are a wide range of carefully planned opportunities that help to develop pupils' confidence in a range of social settings. All pupils benefit from these enrichment activities. For instance, students in the sixth form host open evenings and community sessions at the school. Pupils use the money raised from events such as this to support their community work, such as students' voluntary work in a local care home. These experiences help pupils,

including those in the sixth form, to hone many of the skills they will need as they grow into adulthood.

## **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, the school has not defined the precise knowledge that pupils will learn. Where this happens, teachers are not clear about the knowledge pupils are expected to learn, and do not always design lessons that support the aims of the curriculum. This holds pupils back. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is equally well planned across all subjects, so that the knowledge to be taught is clearly defined.
- The careers education that pupils receive is limited in its scope. Consequently, pupils are not always aware of the broad range of opportunities that are available to them in the future. Leaders should ensure that they provide pupils with a broad range of meaningful encounters with the world of work to support them to develop their understanding of future career pathways.
- In some subjects, teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to adapt learning activities to meet the intended learning set out in the curriculum. This limits the progress pupils make. The school should continue its subject knowledge enhancement work to ensure that all teachers understand the subject and select appropriate learning activities linked to the curriculum goals.

## **Background**

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the predecessor school to be good in April 2018.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	146901
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294646
<b>Type of school</b>	Special
<b>School category</b>	Academy special converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Gender of pupils in sixth-form provision</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	196
<b>Of which, number on roll in the sixth form</b>	39
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	Board of trustees
<b>Chair of trust</b>	Jason Marsden
<b>Headteachers</b>	Letitia Carter and Sam Wood
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.queenscroft.staffs.sch.uk">www.queenscroft.staffs.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- Queens Croft High School is a secondary special school that caters for pupils who have a range of SEND. These include moderate learning difficulties, autism, speech, language and communication disorders and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school is one of seven academies in the Primitas Learning Partnership.
- The range of needs of pupils who attend the school has increased recently. These changes have largely been in response to the increased need for special education provision within the local authority.
- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan.
- The school has a sixth form. Students do not attend any alternative provision for their education or training.

- 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**

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the 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.
- Inspectors held discussions with the co-headteachers, and other senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: mathematics, personal, social health and economic education and early reading. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors met with members of staff and spoke to pupils formally and informally at various points in the inspection. The inspectors considered responses to pupil and staff surveys and Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text responses.
- Inspectors looked at records and spoke to staff in relation to attendance and behaviour.

## **Inspection team**

Alexander Laney, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

David Lisowski

Ofsted Inspector

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