

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle

West Street, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 5AD

Inspection dates: 4 and 5 June 2024

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	Not previously inspected under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Simon Furness. The school is part of the Horncastle Education Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Sandra James, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Wendy Ireland.

Ofsted has not previously inspected Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Horncastle as an academy under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 as, 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 at any point since the last graded inspection of the predecessor school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Most pupils, and students in the sixth form, speak enthusiastically about their school. They describe the school as friendly and welcoming, with a warm community feel. Relationships are positive between pupils and with staff. Sixth-form students are positive role models for younger pupils. The large majority of parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school. Expectations are typically high, and most pupils live up to them. Pupils feel happy and safe. The school environment is calm and orderly. Most pupils attend well and behave well.

The school's curriculum is ambitious and inclusive of all pupils. Pupils learn a wide range of subjects across all key stages. Pupils, and students in the sixth form, achieve very well in all subjects by the end of each key stage, particularly strongly in humanities subjects. However, sometimes the quality of pupils' routine classwork is not as high as it could be. Occasionally, poorly presented or incomplete work is left unchallenged by staff.

Pupils enjoy a wealth of opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities and enrichment visits. They are enthusiastic about the extensive range available, including sports, musical productions and a thriving Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. Pupils look forward to 'frantic fortnight' in the summer term.

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

The school has developed an ambitious curriculum for all pupils. The suite of subjects that make up the English Baccalaureate lies at the heart of this. Pupils study a wide range of courses that progressively meet their interests and aspirations. These exceed the requirements of the national curriculum. All pupils learn dual modern foreign languages and citizenship, for example. Leaders have ensured that staff have clarity about what is taught and when. This ensures that pupils' knowledge and skills build cumulatively over time. In the sixth form, the curriculum is complemented by enrichment courses that prepare students well for future independence and academic study. These include finance and the extended project qualification, for example.

Pupils benefit from being taught by specialist staff. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. They draw on a wide range of well-selected resources to impart new concepts and ideas effectively. The school's assessment structure enables pupils to build their confidence and competence in handling increasingly demanding tasks. However, staff do not always check to ensure that all pupils, and students in the sixth form, consistently produce the high-quality written work they are capable of before moving on to new tasks.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are typically well supported in school. Many parents speak of staff 'going the extra mile' to provide the help and support that pupils with SEND need.

Reading is well promoted in school. Pupils often read independently. Leaders recognise that their plans to support pupils who need additional help to strengthen reading accuracy and comprehension are at an early stage of development.

The school takes pupils' personal development seriously. Dual programmes of citizenship and personal, social, health and economic education help to inform pupils about personal safety, positive relationships and sex education, for example. Pupils typically have a strong understanding of diversity, and they celebrate what makes people different and unique. Pupils are taught about fundamental British values and protected characteristics. They are being well prepared to become responsible citizens in modern society.

The school has a clear programme of careers advice and guidance that builds from Year 7 through to the sixth form. Almost all pupils move on to sustained next steps in education or training. Students in the sixth form are particularly well prepared for university. Nevertheless, some students say that they would like more support for non-university pathways. Leaders are acting on this.

Recently, staff have collaborated to develop and implement a new behaviour policy. Although in its early days, the school's new approach has been well received by staff and pupils alike. New tracking systems are helping to tackle small pockets of low-level disruption and lateness to lessons. Suspensions are used appropriately, albeit very rarely. Pupils like the school's 'whisper' service to share any worries they may have.

Staff are highly supportive of the school. Their morale is positive. Staff say they value the opportunities provided for their professional development, particularly in developing the curriculum.

Leaders, local governors and trustees are committed to the school and its future success. Governors are active in their support and effective in holding leaders to account. The school is well supported by the trust. Equally, the school contributes to the work of the trust and provides specialist support for other schools in the locality.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school has developed an ambitious and well-sequenced curriculum. However, teachers do not always ensure that all pupils consistently apply their knowledge well, including when completing extended written tasks. Sometimes, despite strong achievement outcomes by the end of each key stage, the quality of pupils' work is not always as high as it could be, nor as well presented as it might be, including in the sixth form. Occasionally, pupils leave work incomplete. The school

should ensure that teachers check and ensure that all pupils value their classwork and routinely live up to the high expectations that the school has of them.

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	138665
Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	10288339
Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Academy converter
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	816
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	208
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Wendy Ireland
CEO of the trust	Sandra James
Headteacher	Simon Furness
Website	www.qegs.lincs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school collaborated with three other local schools to form the Horncastle Education Trust in December 2018.
- The school meets the requirements of the provider access legislation, which requires schools to provide pupils in Years 8 to 13 with information about approved technical qualifications and apprenticeships.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative education provider.

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 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.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and the trust's executive officer. They also met with other members of the school's leadership team, including the school's leader for the sixth form and coordinator for pupils with SEND.
- The lead inspector met with the CEO of the trust. He also met with several members of the school's local governing body and board of trustees, including the chair of both.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in English, geography, mathematics, music, physical education and science. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum with subject leaders, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work. It was not possible to visit routine lessons during the inspection due to the school's arrangements for internal and external assessments across all year groups.
- An inspector also reviewed curriculum documentation for art, drama and history.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in school and around the school site during social time. They spoke with several groups of pupils, both formally and informally.
- 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View and Ofsted's surveys for school staff and pupils.

Inspection team

Chris Stevens, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Sean Kelly	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Anderson	Ofsted Inspector
Ellenor Beighton	Ofsted Inspector
Matthew Sammy	Ofsted Inspector

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