

# Inspection of Queen Alexandra College

Inspection dates: 26 to 28 June 2024

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Good</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Information about this provider

Queen Alexandra College (QAC) is an independent specialist college located in Harborne, Birmingham. The college has two additional campuses in the Birmingham area. Learners study at these campuses as part of their transition away from the main college site, to prepare them for life after college.

The college offers residential and day provision for students with a visual impairment, autism, physical disabilities and/or other learning difficulties. There are currently 352 students studying on day courses and 21 students living in college residential provision. The college offers a wide range of personal development and vocational courses from pre-entry level to level 3. There are 15 students on supported internships.

The college does not work with any subcontractors.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Students benefit from good teaching which enables them to gain the skills and knowledge they need to prepare them for life after college. Most students achieve their qualifications and/or learning outcomes relevant to their pathway.

Nearly all students on vocational courses benefit from well-planned and relevant work experience. Staff ensure that placements, including those on the college site, reflect students' long-term goals. Most students can explain how this experience will help them to find employment.

Most students improve their confidence during their time at college. Staff and mentors provide students with personal support. They provide students with appropriate technologies and aids, which allow them to become more independent. Where appropriate, students gain the skills to travel on public transport without assistance.

Students have frequent opportunities to discuss the nature of healthy relationships. They can accurately explain the nature of positive friendships, the notion of consent, and what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of others. Students know how to keep themselves safe at college, at work, at home and online.

Students benefit from a wide range of clubs, including art, music and sport. They take part in tournaments with other colleges and enterprise competitions. Most students maintain their well-being through attending weekly gym and yoga sessions.

The main college site and the two additional campuses are calm and nurturing environments that enable the students to develop their social skills. However, during recreational activities, a few students lose interest and behave poorly.

Students are positive about attending college and are keen to learn. Most students develop positive habits for learning, socialising and adulthood. A few students miss a high number of lessons due to therapies and other authorised appointments. This slows down the progress they make in learning.

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

Senior leaders have remedied the weaknesses from the previous inspection. Leaders have improved the quality of education so that it is now good. They use an appropriate range of ways to assess the quality of education. They use the information from these activities to accurately identify the areas for improvement. Leaders manage the performance of staff well and provide clear targets for improvement. They provide staff training to improve their craft of teaching.

Governors provide effective oversight. They have extensive experience and appropriate expertise. They hold senior leaders to account and challenge leaders to

improve the quality of education. Governors have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college.

Senior leaders have developed an ambitious curriculum vision. They have designed five curriculum pathways which meet the needs and aspirations of students. Each pathway has a clear purpose, which ranges from preparation for adulthood to preparation for vocational qualifications and employment. Students are clear about the purpose of the curriculum they are studying and how it relates to their long-term goals. Most students move on to higher-level pathways, to further education outside of QAC, to employment or independent living.

Tutors are suitably qualified. Most vocational tutors have industry experience in the subjects that they teach. Tutors keep up to date with teaching and industry trends. Leaders and managers provide staff with extensive training for them to support the health and care needs of students. This training has enabled staff to provide highly individualised support for students with complex communication needs.

Leaders and managers have ensured that students have access to well-qualified and experienced therapy teams and services. Staff put in place individualised therapy programmes and equipment to ensure students can access their learning as independently as possible.

At the start of the year, tutors identify what students already know and can do. They have an accurate understanding of students' education, health and care plans. They use this to inform their curriculums and to ensure that staff place students on the correct pathway for their needs and interests. Staff use this information as a baseline from which to measure students' progress.

Most teaching staff support students effectively to overcome barriers to their learning. Tutors in hospitality and catering provide students with helpful assistive technologies to support their learning. Students with visual impairments use magnifiers and read and write software, to enable them to make swift progress.

Most tutors plan their curriculums logically. In digital media, tutors plan teaching activities carefully to build skills over time. Students learn about organisation and timekeeping skills before moving to pre-production skills and producing audio recordings. They then use the skills that they have learned to shoot a short film.

Students gain valuable new knowledge, skills and behaviours. In the care curriculum, due to teachers' clear explanations, students understand the stages of child development. In provision for life (Pfl) pathways, staff use flash cards to enable students to follow sets of instructions to make simple meals. In vocational courses, tutors demonstrate practical skills and develop technical language through repetition. When making bread, hospitality students use terminology such as kneading and knocking back correctly.

On the Pfl pathways most tutors use signs well, and staff members adapt their communication to individual students' needs. However, in a few instances, tutors use

signs with students who already have English reading skills, and staff are too quick to answer on behalf of students. This slows students' development.

Leaders and managers provide a rich curriculum and appropriate work opportunities for students on supported internships. Students on internships rapidly develop the personal and technical skills they need for employment and most secure jobs.

Students continue to develop their English and mathematical skills throughout their time at QAC. In English, students' spelling and communication skills notably improve as well as the legibility of their handwriting. Vocational tutors work closely with the English and mathematics tutors to ensure that they develop these skills at the right level.

Staff provide developmental verbal feedback to students. However, staff do not always provide written feedback that clearly states what students need to do to improve.

Staff provide students with access to impartial careers education, information, advice and guidance. Most students can clearly explain their next steps.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Ensure that staff improve the quality of written feedback in all pathways and support for students in the Pfl pathway.
- Increase leaders' and managers' oversight of the enrichment and recreational activities so that staff convey clear purpose and expectations of students' behaviour.
- Manage authorised absences so that students miss fewer classes.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	131963
<b>Address</b>	49 Court Oak Road Harborne Birmingham West Midlands B17 9TG
<b>Contact number</b>	0121 428 5050
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.qac.ac.uk">www.qac.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Bev Jessop
<b>Provider type</b>	Independent Specialist College
<b>Dates of previous inspection</b>	22 to 24 March 2022
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

Martin Ward, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Steve Kelly	His Majesty's Inspector
Suzanne Wainwright	His Majesty's Inspector
Joanne Keatley	Ofsted Inspector

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