



# Queen Mary's Grammar School

## Inspection Report

**Unique Reference Number** 104262  
**LEA** Walsall  
**Inspection number** 277119  
**Inspection dates** 9 November 2005 to 10 November 2005  
**Reporting inspector** Janet Thompson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Grammar (selective)	<b>School address</b>	Sutton Road
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided		Walsall
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11 to 18		West Midlands WS1 2PG
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Boys	<b>Telephone number</b>	01922 720696
<b>Number on roll</b>	680	<b>Fax number</b>	01922 725932
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair of governors</b>	Mr Peter Stretton
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable	<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Stuart Holtam

<b>Age group</b> 11 to 18	<b>Inspection dates</b> 9 November 2005 - 10 November 2005	<b>Inspection number</b> 277119
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Queen Mary's Grammar School is a popular selective school for boys and has been a specialist language college since September 2002. There are 680 pupils on roll of whom 202 attend the sixth form, including some girls. The pupil population reflects a rich cultural diversity, more than half the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Over 19% of pupils do not have English as their first language. There are very few pupils with special educational needs.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## **Overall effectiveness of the school**

### **Grade: 2**

The inspection confirms the school's evaluation that it is a good school. There are significant strengths in the standards pupils achieve, leadership, and the emphasis on targeting additional intervention for some pupils. A large proportion of parents are very pleased with the education the school provides but less convinced that pupils' views are sought and acted upon. As a result of targeted intervention from a range of approaches, all groups of pupils make good progress in relation to their prior attainment.

The school standards of behaviour and attendance are good. The majority of teaching is good or better but more still needs to be done to ensure all teaching is of the highest quality. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available at the school and these are valued by the pupils. A little more could be done to reflect the widening interests of pupils. Although there is rich cultural diversity in the pupil population, the school does not do enough to promote understanding of other cultures through the curriculum. The school encourages pupils' fitness but could take more action to support pupils in making healthy diet choices.

Pupils generally enjoy their time at school and many are keen to stay on into the sixth form. Good teaching and a curriculum which places an emphasis on preparing young people for higher education and work make important contributions to the school's strong performance. The school is well led and effectively managed. Some department heads have high quality systems for improving achievement in their subjects, and this practice needs to be more widely shared.

Value for money is good. The school has made good progress since the last inspection, particularly in improving teaching and the progress made by lower achieving pupils. The good leadership and dedication of the school leadership group demonstrate that the school has the capacity to further improve its performance. More involvement of pupils in decision making in the school would further enhance the ability to improve.

## **Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Standards are extremely high, with improving grades at higher levels. There is a good level of challenge provided by the school, for example, encouraging more able students to take advanced extension papers. Teaching and learning is good; students are engaged in lessons and display good levels of knowledge. Some lessons do not sufficiently develop independent learning. Students have increasing levels of responsibility in the day-to-day running of the school and they rise to this challenge. Leadership and management are good with a clear focus on monitoring student progress and supporting students in their aspirations.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- further improve the quality of lessons by increasing challenging expectations that encourage greater pupil participation.
- increase the role of pupils in decision making in the school particularly by redefining the role and responsibilities of the school council.
- improve cultural education to reflect society and celebrate the diversity of the pupil population.
- actively support pupils in their efforts to live healthily by limiting the number of unhealthy dietary options.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are very high, although they are consistently lower in English than in mathematics and science. Most pupils make good progress during their first three years, particularly in English and mathematics. In science a significant group of middle attaining pupils make only satisfactory progress, but nevertheless by the end of Year 9 standards in the national examinations are very high in comparison to national averages. Over the last five years standards have fluctuated, but were considerably higher in 2005 than in the previous year. In the foundation subjects standards are generally in line with expectations of a grammar school.

By the end of Year 11, standards in the national examinations are very high, and have steadily improved over the last five years. The pupils make good progress, although this varies from outstanding in some subject areas to satisfactory in a small number. Where achievement is good it is because of a combination of good teaching providing challenging targets, and the pupils' own high intellectual capability helped by their enthusiasm for learning.

Standards in the sixth form are well above national averages and consistently high. There has been an increase in higher grades in 2005 for both AS and A levels. However, there are some variations in achievement between subjects.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those with English as an additional language make as good progress as their peers. The achievement of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is as good as those with White British backgrounds.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils enjoy school and have positive attitudes towards their work. They particularly relish the intellectual challenge of attaining very high standards. Attendance is good. Pupils, moral and social development is good and this is reflected in their positive behaviour and respect for others. Opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of the culture of different heritage groups, to prepare for life in a multicultural society, are too limited. Pupils feel safe at school and agree that the isolated cases of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils are very aware of the need to eat healthy food. However the

food sold in the tuck shop, vending machines and in the canteen does not offer enough healthy options. While older pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop an understanding of sex and relationships such opportunities are not provided for younger pupils. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, for example through charity work. They have too few opportunities to contribute to decision making on wider school issues, particularly through the school council. A very broad range of opportunities ensures pupils make outstanding progress in developing their skills for the world of work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching is good and has improved since the last inspection. The judgements that senior leaders make of the quality of lessons are accurate, which was demonstrated when they joined inspectors for the observation of two lessons. Teachers are well informed about their students and have good relationships with them. The new tracking system identifies pupils requiring additional intervention quickly but this information needs to be used more consistently across all subjects. The majority of lessons are good or outstanding, and the rest are satisfactory. In the good and outstanding lessons pupils respond well to activities which require them to grapple with new and complex ideas. They are encouraged to further their own learning by the perceptive feedback given by their teachers about how to improve. The lessons are well planned and practice reflects the very good attention given to the differing needs of members of the class. The weaknesses in the otherwise satisfactory lessons include teaching that is based too heavily on the transmission of facts, and has insufficient challenge or opportunities for the pupils to be actively involved in their own learning. Some teachers do not always ensure they offer sufficient challenge for the most able pupils or carefully enough check that all the pupils have understood the key ideas.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

Pupils do a range of interesting work which is well matched to their interests and learning needs. The curriculum is highly academic and there is a strong focus on high expectations for all. The use of fast track examination courses challenges many of the most able pupils. Provision for relatively lower ability learners, and for those where English is not their first language, takes good account of individual learning needs. The school's Specialist Language College status enriches the curriculum significantly through forging links across subjects and with the local and international communities. These enable the school to be responsive to local needs, and pupils to have many opportunities to take on community responsibilities. Together with the good provision for literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), they help pupils to develop key skills needed for economic well-being and to be well prepared

for their future. Pupils appreciate the additional opportunities provided by the wide range of clubs and enrichment activities and involvement is high. The school recognises that the range does not yet fully meet the interests of all pupils but the nature of the activities helps pupils develop many skills required for their future life.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care, guidance and support of pupils are good and reflect the deep commitment of staff to their well-being. The rigorous procedures being developed for tracking pupils' progress are already proving to be effective in supporting, through early intervention, those at risk of underachievement. Learning thrives in a safe and secure environment, enabling learners to achieve very high standards. Good attendance is maintained through rigorous monitoring of absence. For a very few individuals who have not had good attendance, the school has offered support and taken necessary action. Child protection arrangements are satisfactory. Risk assessment is robust and pupils in science and design and technology lessons were very well informed of safety regulations. They are well guided in making choices for future options through careers and personal, social and health education and the school's close contact with universities and employers. The school provides an outstanding range of opportunities to develop pupils' economic well-being which includes work experience in this country and overseas, young enterprise, links with the connexions service, and interviews from local businesses.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher leads the school very well and promotes an environment that values all students. His very critical approach and analysis of performance and data are outstanding. Managers share his commitment and the team have played a major role in improving standards and achievement. The introduction of some initiatives has had a very positive impact and helped the school improve. Specialist Language College status is a good example, as are the very effective intervention strategies put into place to raise individual achievement in some subjects.

Self-evaluation is accurate and thorough. The headteacher demonstrates exemplary practice for holding heads of department to account. Relevant action is taken to support departments in their improvement. Although the headteacher has a good knowledge of the different quality of managers, the support given to departments does not always fully exploit the strengths of the senior leadership group.

Lesson observations are well established and the quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher has been instrumental in helping staff understand the value of observations as a method for helping to improve their own practice. Not all senior managers are as skilled as others in providing clearly written and focused points for improvement to help teachers and, therefore, impact can sometimes be variable.

The school regularly seeks the views of parents and a very high number of parents responded to the inspection questionnaire. The school responds to concerns raised, for example, introducing fast tracking to reduce the amount of coursework in Year 11. However some parents feel that when views are expressed they are not always fully informed of why the school has responded in the way it has. There are some examples where the school does not seek alternative routes to widen the provision in response to pupils' views.

There is effective challenge from the governing body facilitated by detailed information with accompanying analysis provided by the school. The governors have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement and fulfil their statutory duties.

Since the last inspection accommodation has improved, providing better facilities for sport, multi-media activities and, resources for ICT. There is a good emphasis by the senior management team to meet the needs of all pupils and as a result the capacity to improve further is good.



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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	2	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3	2
The behaviour of learners	2	2
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	2	2
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	2
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy</b>	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	No
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
<b>The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe</b>	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
<b>The extent to which learners make a positive contribution</b>	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	No
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
<b>The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being</b>	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Queen Mary's Grammar School Sutton Road Walsall West Midlands

29 November 2005

Dear Pupils,

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. I would especially like to thank those pupils who answered our many questions. You are right to be very proud of your school and the achievements you all make.

Your headteacher and staff are working hard to offer you a good education. We saw many good lessons and teachers frequently give you challenging work. For some of you there could be even more challenge and, for all of you, a greater number of opportunities to become more actively involved in your learning. We know that you get a lot of support from staff, and not just during lessons. You told us how much you appreciate their help and their swift action to stop any bullying.

You behave well and attend school regularly. Many of you relish the academic challenge provided by the school and are extremely pleased with the range of extra-curricular opportunities available. A large number of your parents responded to our questionnaire and most are very pleased with the education the school provides. However, many agree with us that you are not always involved enough in the decisions made at the school. We have asked the school to take more action as a result of your views and to increase opportunities for you to help the school improve further.

The curriculum at the school is good and prepares you well for higher education and work. We think more could be done to promote understanding of other cultures.

The PE department works hard to encourage you to be fit but many of you continue to make unhealthy choices about what you eat. We would like you to work with the school to encourage healthier eating.

Most of you appear to enjoy your time at school and it was pleasing to know that so many of you are keen to stay on into the sixth form. Keep up the good work and thank you for your help. Yours sincerely,

Janet Thompson HMI Lead inspector, on behalf of the whole inspection team