



Queen Elizabeth's School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113883
LEA Dorset
Inspection number 279273
Inspection dates 19 September 2005 to 20 September 2005
Reporting inspector Paul Sadler AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Blandford Road
School category	Voluntary controlled		Pamphill
Age range of pupils	13 to 18		Wimborne, Dorset BH21 4DT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01202 885233
Number on roll	1442	Fax number	01202 840703
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	19 September 2005	Headteacher	Mr Andy Puttock

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
13 to 18	19 September 2005 - 20 September 2005	279273

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Queen Elizabeth's School serves a large and mainly rural part of East Dorset. Many students travel long distances to school, chiefly by bus. The school has long-standing historical links with the Anglican church of Wimborne Minster and retains its Christian character although Christian practice is not a criterion for admission.

The school occupies a pleasant site and shares the use of a leisure centre with the general public. It was designated a specialist sports college in September 2003. The school is larger than average and its sixth form of 351 students is also larger than average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties or disabilities is broadly average and the proportion of students receiving free school meals is below average. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is low, as is the number who do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of students who join or leave the school other than at the usual time is below average, although the school admits new students into the sixth form.

The standards students have achieved on starting at the school are similar to national averages.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Queen Elizabeth's School gives a good education to its students. The school has accurately analysed its strengths and weaknesses. The school gives good value for money. Achievement is outstanding in Year 9, good in Years 10 and 11 and is satisfactory in the sixth form.

The school's strengths include its outstanding response to its designation as a specialist sports college. This is greatly strengthening its links with the community, especially first and middle schools, and is beginning to be used for whole-school improvement. The school gives good care and support to its students, especially through the outstanding and innovative 'Teenage Life Centre'. Students rightly feel safe, secure, respected and well-treated by adults in the school. The headteacher and senior staff provide effective leadership. The school has also taken action to improve the quality of teaching and learning but the quality of monitoring across faculties is variable. Students' understanding of their personal targets and how to achieve them is satisfactory.

The school's actions in improving the sixth form, standards and teaching in some GCSE subjects and its response to designation as a specialist sports college demonstrate that it has the capacity to improve further. Inspectors are convinced that the school has now identified and responded appropriately to the weaknesses that exist. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. For instance, GCSE results have improved.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 3

Inspectors agree with the school that the effectiveness and efficiency of its sixth form provision is satisfactory. This is the weakest aspect of the school's provision. Following well-judged action, the provision is now satisfactory but there is much scope for further improvement. Strengths of the sixth form include good opportunities for personal development and the care, guidance and support students receive. There are many opportunities for visits overseas, to the theatre and to musical productions. Standards and students' achievement are satisfactory. Weaknesses include teaching and learning which are too variable in quality, and some limitations in the range of courses for those for whom A Level is unsuitable. Opportunities to develop key skills such as the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are also limited. The school has identified these weaknesses and is taking appropriate action and recent improvements are encouraging.

What the school should do to improve further

- Continue to improve standards and students' achievement in the sixth form.
- Ensure that monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning are used consistently to raise standards.

- Further improve students' understanding of their personal targets and how to achieve them.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

Students enter the school with average standards. They achieve good standards and make good progress overall, but with considerable variation. In Year 9, students' achievement is outstanding and they achieve well above average results in national tests. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is good and GCSE results are above average. In the sixth form, the standards achieved are satisfactory. Groups such as those with special educational needs, those in public care and those of minority ethnic heritage make progress that is as good as, or better than, other students in the school.

The school welcomes students of all abilities into the sixth form. The standards they achieved at the end of their courses in 2004 were below average, mainly due to those of lower ability pursuing unsuitable courses. However, the school has now introduced measures to raise standards and a preliminary analysis of 2005 results shows an improvement. Scrutiny of students' work and observation of lessons show that they are now making satisfactory progress although the school recognises correctly that further improvement is needed.

Students are set realistic targets based on rigorous analysis of their test and examination results and of standardised and teachers' assessments. Progress towards these targets is regularly monitored but students and some teachers demonstrate limited understanding of the targets.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Students' personal development and well-being are good. Spiritual development is a strength. The school's Christian ethos is apparent through assemblies and religious education, but is not overbearing. Students have many opportunities for social development through clubs, sport and travel. There is a strong moral ethos but the personal education programme relies too heavily on individual form tutors who are not specialists in the field, and is variable in quality. The school works hard to prepare students, who are largely of white British heritage, for life in an ethnically diverse society. They are taught to respect people of all backgrounds and religious viewpoints.

Students are mostly prepared to work hard. Their behaviour is good. There have been no recent permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions are low. Incidents involving violence or the use of drugs are rare. Attendance is good, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Students say they enjoy being at Queen Elizabeth's because of their relationships with staff and other students.

The school makes the safety of students paramount. Risk assessments are carried out and a co-ordinator has been appointed for educational visits who ensures these

activities meet all safety requirements. The school tries hard to teach students to pursue healthy lifestyles. As part of its sports college status, all new students receive a fitness check and fitness plan. Healthy eating is promoted, and students are taught about the dangers of drugs, smoking and alcohol. Since the school became a sports college, students have made an increasingly positive contribution to the community, especially to local first and middle schools. Links with the local business community prepare students for their future economic well-being. All have work experience in Year 10 and beyond although opportunities for extended work experience in Year 11 and the sixth form are more limited.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The quality of teaching and learning for students aged 13-16 is good. The school has planned a thorough programme for improving teaching and the first fruits of this are beginning to show in some subjects and faculties. Better teaching strategies across the school, supported by an extensive programme of professional development, as well as greater involvement of students in the assessment of their work are having a positive effect and are improving standards. Teaching assistants are well deployed.

Students generally enjoy their work. They respond well in lessons when they have the opportunity to be fully involved, to make key decisions about what they do next and to evaluate the quality of what they have done.

Most teachers are knowledgeable about their subject and their enthusiasm rubs off on students. Teachers mostly plan their lessons well, using a common approach across the school, and they respond to the needs of particular students. Students understand the structure of lessons and teachers share lesson objectives with them, ensuring they are very clear about the work they are asked to do. For instance, in a Year 11 dance lesson, students very quickly recalled work done previously, developing their dances using new knowledge very skilfully imparted by the teacher. In most subjects, teachers plan well to meet the differing needs of groups such as boys and girls, and those with learning difficulties or other special educational needs. Sometimes teachers do not stretch gifted students by providing more demanding work, a point about which some parents are concerned.

There is evidence of good assessment in most subjects. Students welcome the support of most teachers' marking, particularly where this leads to dialogue between student, school and home regarding ways to raise achievement.

In the sixth form, teachers are working hard to improve their teaching and this is beginning to improve students' progress and standards. Lessons are interesting and there are good relationships between students and teachers. In some subjects, marking is patchy and, in others, teaching and learning are hampered by limited resources. For instance they have limited access to ICT in science subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school offers a good curriculum to students aged 13-16 that meets their needs. There has been innovation, for example, the decision to introduce applied and short GCSE courses, and vocational courses for all students as a way of addressing new and evolving needs. In particular, sports college status has led to the introduction of a wide range of sports and fitness-related courses. All students have two hours of sports activity each week. This has raised achievement. The requirements of the National Curriculum are met in full and pupils are taught to be safe and healthy and are prepared well for adult life. Opportunities for extending the curriculum offered on the school site through joint initiatives with other schools and external agencies, such as the life-drawing classes at a neighbouring school, are used effectively to raise standards.

There is a good range of additional activities outside school. In the sporting arena, the Sports Leaders' Award encourages students to become involved in the lives of others. There are many arts events for which students prepare and polish work for exhibition and performance to the outside community.

The curriculum for students who need additional help with their learning, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is appropriately modified and is a particular strength of the school.

In the sixth form a good range of AS and A Level courses is offered. There are satisfactory opportunities for students to benefit from vocational courses. The school is increasing the range of these types of as resources permit. Opportunities for students to develop their basic skills, for instance in using ICT, could be extended further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school offers good care, guidance and support to its students. The 'Teenage Life Centre', an innovative partnership with the NHS Primary Care Trust and other agencies, offers an outstanding level of confidential support in health and other personal matters. Students, especially those considering higher education, receive good careers guidance. The school has a deservedly high reputation locally for the quality of its support for vulnerable students, such as those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those in public care. As a result, these groups achieve well. All parts of the school are accessible to disabled people, for instance through the installation of lifts. Students have individual targets for their achievement in each subject, based on a rigorous analysis of their previous performance. However, students' and teachers' understanding of the targets, and of how they might be used to raise achievement, is still developing. At best, they are used very well for this purpose.

The school has good arrangements to safeguard students from potential harm. The background of all adults who come into contact with students is checked rigorously. Students feel safe at the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and senior staff lead the school with energy and enthusiasm. The work of middle managers is more variable, but many weaknesses have been dealt with, resulting in improved results in 2005. The headteacher, senior staff and governors have set a clear direction for the school, evident in their commitment to equality of opportunity and the quality of care and support it provides for its students. Governance is satisfactory and the governors meet fully their legal obligations, for instance to promote equality of opportunity. Staffing is good and resources are adequate, although sixth form students need better access to ICT.

Senior managers and governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well and are taking action to build on the former and deal with the latter. They have undertaken a thorough and accurate analysis of all aspects of the school's performance. The views of parents and students have been sought and they have been kept well informed. A culture of monitoring and self-review is being developed but is not yet fully embedded throughout the school. Many middle managers are new to their posts but know what must be done to improve students' achievements. Senior managers and the governing body have correctly identified that putting right weaknesses in sixth form provision is the highest priority. The measures being taken are effective and leading to improved examination results. However, further steps need to be taken to make this overriding importance clear to all.

Recent actions to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and to boost examination results at GCSE and in the sixth form show that the school has the necessary capacity to rectify current weaknesses.

Inspection judgements

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

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	3
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

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The behaviour of learners	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	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	2	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	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	3	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
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
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
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
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
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

My colleagues and I greatly enjoyed inspecting your school last week. Many of you told us how much you enjoyed school, felt safe there and how good the relationships are between you and the staff.

A number of your parents and carers responded to a confidential questionnaire or talked to us and we also took their views and concerns into account when making judgements. We encourage you to read the report but this letter is to let you know what your school does well and how you can help your school to be even better than it is.

The main strengths of your school

Students work hard and make good progress in Years 9, 10 and 11.

Those who are vulnerable or going through a 'rough patch' in their life are very well cared for and supported by the school, especially through the Teenage Life Centre.

Most students are making the most of the excellent opportunities offered by the school being a Sports College, for instance by obtaining the Junior Sports Leader Award.

Students take responsibility and make an active contribution to their community, for example by organising events for middle and first school children.

What you can do to make your school better

Make sure you know what your target levels or grades are and ask teachers for help in understanding what you need to do to achieve them.

All students, especially those in the sixth form, should tell teachers if they have sensible ideas for improving the school

Good luck with your studies