



Queen Elizabeth High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 116930
LEA Herefordshire
Inspection number 279951
Inspection dates 11 May 2006 to 12 May 2006
Reporting inspector Anthony Shield AI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Ashfields
School category	Community		Bromyard
Age range of pupils	11 to 16		Herefordshire HR7 4QS
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01885 482230
Number on roll	374	Fax number	01885 483935
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Bill Evans
Date of previous inspection	6 November 2000	Headteacher	Mr Adrian Long

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
11 to 16	11 May 2006 - 12 May 2006	279951

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Queen Elizabeth High School is a smaller than average comprehensive school, serving a rural community in Bromyard and outlying villages. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, with a very small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Fewer than average pupils are eligible for free school meals. One hundred and one pupils have learning difficulties, mainly in terms of speech and language, with some pupils having social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. As a percentage of the school roll, this is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Queen Elizabeth High School provides a satisfactory standard of education, and offers satisfactory value for money. The school has made significant improvements recently and is well placed to make further improvements as the impact of management initiatives begin to bite further. Standards are broadly average and students overall achieve satisfactorily. However, this masks some variation in the performance of some students and between subjects. While all students, including the less able, make satisfactory progress and are well supported, the achievement of more able students, while satisfactory, is less marked. Standards in English at GCSE are not high enough.

Students' personal development is good. Their courteous behaviour and care for one another are a reflection of their keen response to school and the enthusiasm with which they take opportunities for responsibility. Students also willingly take part in the good range of sporting and musical extra-curricular activities. The curriculum provides satisfactorily for their needs and sensible plans are in place to make it even more responsive at Key Stage 4. Students are satisfactorily cared for and the support and guidance given to students with learning difficulties are sensitive and well targeted.

Teaching is improving and is satisfactory overall, although much is good. However, lessons vary in the extent to which students are encouraged to participate actively and to take responsibility for finding things out for themselves. In addition, less effective teaching does not always ensure that more able students are challenged to achieve their best. The school has introduced comprehensive procedures for tracking students' progress and these are beginning to make a difference. However, the use of assessment in classrooms to plan work which builds successfully on individual student's prior attainment is inconsistent.

The headteacher has re-energised the school's purpose and direction. He is well supported by a newly created leadership team and subject leaders, although their contribution is uneven. The school has comprehensive monitoring systems and knows itself well, judging its own effectiveness as satisfactory overall. The implementation of the rapid improvement plan has been very effective in a very short time. High staff turnover is now a thing of the past and there is a strong drive for improvement amongst the whole school community. Governors are better informed and as a result are increasingly confident in their support and challenge to the school management.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve planning to ensure more able students are consistently challenged, particularly in English in Years 10 and 11.
- Improve learning by giving students the confidence to organise their own learning, participate more actively and solve problems independently of the teacher.
- Make better use of assessment in classrooms to plan work which builds on students' prior learning.
- Ensure a more consistent contribution by all leaders and managers to school improvement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement and standards are satisfactory. On entry in Year 7, students' attainment is average and the school has a full range of abilities present. In recent years, progress through Years 7 to 9 has been unsatisfactory and although standards in English, mathematics and science have been broadly average, too many students have underachieved, particularly the more able. This underachievement has now been halted and current students are achieving at least satisfactorily.

During Years 10 and 11, students' progress has been better. The proportion of students achieving five or more A*–G grades in 2005, for example, was above average. However, the proportion of students attaining five or more higher grades at A*–C, and the highest A and A* grades, has been much lower than average in recent years. Results in different subjects have also shown some variation and results in English are too low. Year 11 students are doing much better this year and predictions indicate a much higher level of attainment, with most students at least meeting their targets. Students are also achieving more evenly across all subjects. Although school targets in the past have been challenging, in the last two years they have not been met. This year, with more secure data tracking and management systems in place, the school is more confident that they will be met. However, while all students are now making satisfactory progress, including the above average number with learning difficulties, the achievement of more able students is less marked.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

An ethos of care and respect for each other characterises the good personal development of students. Students respond well to the well planned provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They take part in all activities enthusiastically and identify with the school's caring values. Innovative strategies are used to provoke students' reflection on social and moral issues, for example in the use of video presentations broadcast continuously throughout the school. Students behave well both in and out of lessons and this is reflected in the low number of excluded students. Most enjoy coming to school and attendance is satisfactory and improving. Students are respectful of the school environment and of each other and very few lessons are disrupted by inconsiderate behaviour. Some students do not, however, engage as effectively as they might with the teaching, preferring to remain too passive during some lessons. They feel safe and report that there is very little bullying and that, when it occurs, staff resolve it well. Students are conscious of the effective steps the school has taken to help ensure they follow healthy lifestyles, particularly through more healthy lunches and education about healthy eating. Especially through the school council, students are developing their contribution to the school and wider community. Through work experience and involvement in the Young Enterprise scheme, students are gaining a useful preparation for and insight into their contribution in the work-place.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although much teaching is good, there is too much variation between subjects and the overall quality of teaching is therefore satisfactory. The school is working hard to improve teaching, and iron out inconsistencies, and there has already been a marked improvement. The recognition that some students, particularly the more able, have underachieved in the past has been an important catalyst for change. The most effective teaching is characterised by planning which takes account of each student's prior attainment and enables the students to be clear about what they are aiming for. Most importantly, the teaching encourages an active involvement through stimulating and interesting activities, through questioning which provokes the students to think more deeply and through insisting that students themselves are responsible for organising and solving problems on their own. For example, students reported that they enjoyed religious education because they had a chance to 'have their say' and get involved in the learning. This was borne out in a Year 7 lesson when students were consistently challenged to think and analyse for themselves what they knew about Islam. Not all teaching, however, is of this high quality. Where it is less effective, it is usually because assessment is not being used to plan work which builds on prior attainment, particularly of the more able students.

Many students lack confidence in their ability to do well and the best teaching does much to raise aspirations and boost self-esteem. However, in some lessons, the students' response is muted, learning is passive and there is little encouragement to tackle things on their own.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Students' positive attitudes are in part as a result of the broad and balanced curriculum, which currently provides satisfactorily for their needs. The school has recognised the need to make the curriculum more personalised, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and is undertaking a review for next year. It has already made a good start and students are able to take vocational subjects and alternative work related options. The school is developing increasingly productive partnerships with neighbouring schools and colleges to refine these options.

Support for students with learning difficulties is good, and the above average proportion of students with particular needs benefit from well focused individual education plans and sensitive and targeted support. Students have responded enthusiastically to the opportunities to widen their experience through enrichment activities. Sport, music and drama are proving particularly popular and the students spoke with warmth and appreciation of their involvement in the recent production of *West Side Story*.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All students, including the most vulnerable, are supported by the satisfactory provision for their care, guidance and support. The school provides a safe and secure environment and students know who they can turn to for support. This includes an effective peer support scheme staffed by a trained team of Year 9 students. Child protection arrangements are secure and appropriate checks are carried out before appointing new staff. Students receive good guidance in Year 9 in relation to their GCSE options. The school is conscious of the need to raise students' aspirations and is developing a range of strategies to address this, including Year 9 visits to universities. Students also feel well supported in their post-16 choices, although, given the geographical isolation of the school, there is a need to address more firmly the issue of continuity into post-16 education. The school has recently developed much improved data analyses on students' progress.

Students are now well informed about their progress and targets, and parents are involved through the well attended academic review days. Data are beginning to be used to ensure students at risk of underachievement are identified and targeted effectively.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory, although the exceptional drive and energy of the headteacher have revitalised the school and given it a fresh sense of urgency and purpose. The impact of his initiatives has already been seen in the enhanced reputation of the school in the community; numbers of first-choice students for September is much higher than at this time last year. Also, there is improved staff and student morale; the relatively high staff turnover has now been stemmed with the recognition that this is a school learning to believe in itself.

Leadership at other levels is more mixed. Significant contributions from newly appointed members of the leadership team and from most subject leaders are making a strong contribution. However, leadership in English remains inadequate and is not strong enough to make the necessary improvements. A comprehensive monitoring programme is now in place and proving increasingly effective. As a result, the school's self-evaluation is thorough and involves all stakeholders, including both parents and students who have been consulted over recent changes. There are good procedures for monitoring teaching and thoughtful and analytical feedback is proving effective in improving the quality of teaching. The rapid school improvement plan has provided an effective focus for improvements, and has been carefully monitored to measure its impact. The school rightly identifies the need to sharpen its focus on the quality of learning if improvements already made are to be sustained. Governors are increasingly involved and playing a more effective role in both strategic planning and monitoring, including the budget. Legal requirements are met.

The school is beginning to regain the trust and confidence of its parents. The following quotations are typical of the many positive comments received by inspectors. 'Mr Long and his team seem to be passionate about making good changes to the school'; 'Issues are being tackled with enthusiasm and immense professionalism ... we are very proud of QEHS'.

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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>	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?	3	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

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

The quality of provision

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

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?	3	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

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

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed meeting you and being part of your school for two days. We were impressed by the courteous and polite way in which you answered our questions and made us feel welcome. I know that you will be interested in what we thought about your school.

What we liked most about your school

- The school is improving fast and whereas some of you were underachieving last year, this is no longer the case.
- Behaviour in classrooms and around the school is sensible and reflects your growing maturity and sense of responsibility.
- The enthusiasm with which you take part in extra-curricular activities, including sport and music. West Side Story was obviously a great hit!
- The support and guidance given to those who find learning difficult is well planned.
- Mr Long has created a fresh sense of energy in the school, and you are all responding very positively to this. His plans for further improvement are sensible and realistic.

What we have asked your school to do now

- Ensure that if you are capable of achieving the highest grades, you are challenged to do so.
- Improve your learning skills so that you get involved in lessons more actively and do not always rely on the teachers for solving problems.
- Use data on your progress to set work in lessons which builds on what you already know and understand.
- Ensure that all school managers make a strong contribution to further school improvement.

Thank you once again for your help during the inspection. Good luck in the future!