



# Queensmill School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 100378  
**Local Authority** Hammersmith and Fulham  
**Inspection number** 285781  
**Inspection dates** 7–8 March 2007  
**Reporting inspector** Judith Charlesworth

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Special	<b>School address</b>	Clancarty Road
<b>School category</b>	Community special		Fulham
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		London SW6 3AA
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	020 7384 2330
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	54	<b>Fax number</b>	020 7384 2750
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Dr Maria Callias
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Judith Ragan
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 October 2001		

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

Queensmill caters for children who have autistic spectrum disorders. Some have additional needs such as challenging behaviour, and various learning difficulties and medical conditions. All pupils have a statement of their special educational needs, and attainment on entry is well below average for their age. A few pupils join from mainstream classes where their social and emotional difficulties rather than learning difficulties have led to a breakdown in placement. Other pupils are severely affected by their autistic spectrum disorder, and also have learning difficulties of varying severity. Some of these pupils have attended mainstream nursery or school. Boys outnumber girls by eight to one, which reflects the national gender balance in children with autistic spectrum disorder. More than half the pupils are from minority ethnic heritages and one quarter has English as an additional language. In the last year, the school has been accredited by the National Autistic Society, and has gained Healthy Schools' status and the Investors in People award. The head teacher has been in post since September 2005.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

Queensmill is an outstanding school and the quality of provision in both the Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2 is excellent. The school recognises that in order for pupils to learn, they must first gain an effective means of communication and overcome the difficulties and anxieties brought about by their autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The achievement and personal development of pupils throughout the school is outstanding as a result. Queensmill was judged to be a good school in the previous inspection. Nevertheless, in the last five terms it has reviewed its provision extensively and taken a fresh approach, reflecting current best practice in working with pupils with ASD. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive. One parent of a new child wrote: 'He's such a happy little thing at home, much happier than he ever was...He is constantly singing and asking for cuddles and kisses which means so much to me.'

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding. Under the skilled direction of the head teacher, a strong, cohesive team of effective managers is moving the school forward and assuring the quality of its work. The leadership team is very reflective and constantly challenges itself as to how the school can improve further. Leadership is becoming increasingly extended, with every member of staff making a valuable contribution. Governance is good and considerable financial investment has been wisely made in three particular aspects to improve the school's practice. Firstly, extensive training has taken place so that all staff understand the difficulties faced by pupils with ASD, and have the skills to support their learning and personal development. A robust induction process for new staff and on-going training for all ensures that staff skills are maintained. Secondly, a picture and symbol-based communication system has been introduced to help pupils communicate, understand and structure their world more effectively. This also ensures that pupils with different home languages have equal opportunities for communicating and learning. Lastly, the school has been re-furbished in a manner that better suits the needs of these particular pupils. All classrooms are set up in a similar way, with different areas for differing purposes, and with a minimum of visual distraction. Nevertheless, each one contains attractive displays of pupils' work and has its own character.

The quality of teaching and the team work between teachers, support staff and speech and language therapists are outstanding. There is the highest possible level of commitment to excellence by all staff. They undertake training and courses to gain additional qualifications willingly and in their own time, and excellent relationships underpin pupils' learning and development. In all lessons and school activities, pupils' personal development, communication skills and academic learning are given equal importance. As far as they are able to, pupils make safe and healthy choices and become increasingly well equipped to contribute to the school and wider communities. Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attendance, outstanding behaviour, and application in class. Teaching is underpinned by a good curriculum, although documentation is often less clear about its educational value than its strength in supporting pupils' ASD. Enrichment is limited. The standards pupils attain are,

understandably, low. However a wide range of data collected over the past two years shows that pupils' achievement is outstanding.

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

- Make sure that curriculum documentation fully reflects the high quality provision for learning in subjects, and look to extending enrichment activities as soon as it is practicable.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils join the school in all age groups, and their skills on entry are generally lower than those typically found for their age. Queensmill collects a range of information about pupils' attainment and progress. Analysis using national benchmarked information shows that whilst standards are lower than expected for their age, pupils make excellent progress. Progress ranges from four levels in a year to progress within one level in a year, but this nevertheless represents excellent achievement for each individual. Analysis of data also shows no difference in the progress made by the different groups of pupils in the school.

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

### **Grade: 1**

The anxieties and behaviours that pupils have on entry diminish quickly with the school's expert support. They come to understand what is expected of them, learn the benefits of effective communication and manage themselves better, for example requesting time away from an activity instead of resorting to more anti-social behaviours. Pupils demonstrate that they make healthy and safe choices, for example by choosing active leisure activities and remembering that they can say no to unwelcome attention. This is a great achievement for them. Behaviour is excellent and the decrease in pupils' challenging behaviours over time is outstanding. Pupils become increasingly independent; they learn to follow their daily schedules without prompting and carry out what they have learned at school within their home. One boy, for example, has frequently made a fruit salad for the family meal since learning how to make one at school. As they grow in self-confidence the pupils look on the demands made of them as positive rather than negative challenges. These developing skills equip them very well for taking their place in society, and for some, for future economic well-being. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent overall, although they find empathy and understanding other people's lives and points of view particularly difficult.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 1

The school's regular observations of teaching have found it to be consistently good or outstanding, and the inspection has confirmed this. Pupils make outstanding progress in lessons and over time. Staff have a very detailed knowledge of each pupil so that their personal, communication and academic needs are consistently addressed. They are acutely aware of individuals' needs and fine-tune what they do to keep pupils calm and working, for example offering ear defenders when pupils appear overwhelmed by sensory input. Very good assessment underpins this. Staff are excellent role models, presenting a deliberate, low key personality in order not to over-stimulate pupils. As a result, pupils' behaviour, compliance and application are outstanding. Staff use the interactive white boards and the communication system exceptionally well. Their response to pupils' communication through picture exchange is immediate and underpins their excellent progress in communicating and learning. Where appropriate, symbols are replaced by words, and pupils learn to organise themselves and record work through traditional reading and writing.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

The curriculum is good, very well resourced and supports pupils' achievement very effectively. At both the Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2 it covers all the required elements and is very well planned. An appropriate emphasis is given to literacy, numeracy and pupils' personal development. A range of learning targets is given throughout subject planning, and those suitable for each individual are identified. However, whilst the curriculum is an excellent vehicle for managing and supporting pupils' ASD, policies and associated documentation often appear to give this more importance than academic learning. Clubs for pupils of mixed ages are arranged for Friday afternoons, but as yet there are no such activities at either end of the school day. This is due to transport difficulties, the pupils' particular problems, and the lack of suitable facilities as the building is far from ideal as a school for autistic pupils. Similarly, although the school enriches the curriculum well by effective use of resources and visits with school staff, the range of visitors and places that pupils feel comfortable enough to visit are limited by their particular needs.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 1

This area of the school's work is excellent. Individual education plans address pupils' ASD needs effectively throughout the day. Very good curriculum planning provides academic targets for each pupil which are achieved through the high quality teaching and support. Pupils' own interests and opinions are taken into account when planning work and activities. As a result of this effective personal and academic support and

guidance, pupils learn to communicate, lose their anxieties, enjoy school and achieve extremely well. Procedures to safeguard pupils and help them stay safe and healthy are robust. All the relevant checks on adults' suitability to work with children are carried out and the information is currently being compiled into a single record as required. Very good support is offered to parents through training, social occasions and help in managing their children. They are kept very well informed about school activities and their children's achievements by a range of means, and so can support their children's learning effectively. The school has excellent working relationships with the speech and language therapists who work alongside class staff and provide valuable information and support for learning. A new occupational therapy service is providing very helpful advice about pupils' sensory needs which is being incorporated effectively into classroom practice.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 1**

The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and focused firmly on helping pupils manage their ASD so that they achieve well and take their place in society. The staff form a close-knit team with the pupils' interests at the heart of all they do. They take joy in every little success, and spend much of their own time making equipment and refining their practice to help pupils further. Excellent management decisions support this ethos. For example, there has been a heavy investment in training and some higher level teaching assistants now carry on class management and teaching in the absence of the teacher. This strategy minimises disruption to pupils. A new outreach service to local schools is proving to be very well managed, effective and sought after. Self-evaluation is extensive and very well founded, although it is not accurately reflected in the school self-evaluation form, which is too modest. However, the school improvement plan is thorough and gives a clear indication of the depth and scope of the plans for continued improvement. The governors' understanding of the school is improving well, and they now provide a good steer and professional challenge. Finances are very well used, as exemplified by the recent developments introduced by the new head teacher. The school is well known as a model of good practice, and the head teacher and staff are increasingly influential in the local and wider communities. Overall, the clarity of direction the school is taking, together with its outstanding quality and methodology indicates excellent capacity for further improvement.

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## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	<b>School Overall</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>	1
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

### Personal development and well-being

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

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	1
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	2
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	1

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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

Thank you for letting me come into your lessons when I visited your school last week to see how it was working and how well you were all doing. I was very pleased with what I found. The staff think that Queensmill is a good school, but I think it is better than that. I think it's excellent and your parents do too.

I found that the staff work very hard to help you stay healthy and safe, enjoy your work and prepare you for your adult lives. You make excellent progress in learning to manage your difficulties, and I think you should be very proud of yourselves. I know some of you find things difficult at times, but you were really very calm and interested in your work while I was in school. Your relationships with the staff are excellent, and I really enjoyed the conversation two of you had with your speech therapist where you discussed where you all went shopping for your clothes.

The head teacher, staff and governors run your school really well. They are always looking for ways to make it better and to help you achieve even more. I particularly liked two recent school developments - the picture and symbol exchange system and the nice, blue and light wood furniture and decoration in your classrooms. I think both help you to stay calm and confident and learn well. The teaching is outstanding and all the staff work very well together to help you. I noticed how much you enjoyed it when you used the interactive white boards. The staff give you an interesting range of things to do, although I feel that they should be prouder of this than their written documentation suggests. I also think that it would be good if you had some after school activities, although I understand that it will be difficult to provide these until the school has moved to a new building. The school has some very good systems to help you learn, and the staff use all the information they collect about your learning to help you achieve very effectively.

In all, I think that you are fortunate to attend Queensmill school, and I know your parents do too. I wish you all the best for your futures.

Yours sincerely

Judith Charlesworth Lead Inspector