

Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101348
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	286039
Inspection date	21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Sean Hanan HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Girls
Number on roll	
School	1124
6th form	223
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Hilary Chamberlain
Headteacher	Mrs Kate Webster
Date of previous school inspection	3 March 2003
School address	High Street Barnet EN5 5RR
Telephone number	020 8449 2984
Fax number	020 8441 2322

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards, the rate of progress in lessons, personal development and well-being, and care, guidance and support. Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation, national published assessment data and the school's own assessment records, policies and minutes, observation of the school at work, interviews with members of staff and pupils, and the parents' questionnaires. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

The school is average in size and most pupils live within a radius of 1.5 miles. Almost half the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage eligible for free school meals is around the average. The school community is culturally diverse; there are around 40 different home languages and a range of faith groups including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Greek Orthodox. The local area is more prosperous than the national average, but it contains pockets of deprivation. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above the national average. The school has specialist status for media arts.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Queen Elizabeth's Girls' is an outstanding school that is proud of its cultural diversity. Clearly articulated values underpin impressive rates of progress for its pupils and students in the sixth form. There is a high level of respect for people, their differences and the surroundings. A secure and happy environment has been established which enables pupils and students to feel valued and positive about their achievements. One pupil said, 'We achieve our motto - to be the best that you can be.'

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and attendance is very good. They have excellent relationships with their teachers and other adults. The large majority mature into confident, polite and articulate young women. Their very positive attitudes and behaviour play a large part in the excellent progress they make. The school council represents the pupils well and they feel their views are valued. Older students value their roles as peer mentors and feel that being 'big sisters' really makes a difference. They contribute well to the local community, for example, by making Christmas hampers for the elderly and they raise funds for charities, such as Cancer UK and Children in Need. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They understand well what a healthy lifestyle involves, for example, through the many opportunities they have to participate in sport. They are also very well prepared for their future lives. The pupils, students and their parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school and its work.

Achievement and standards are outstanding. Pupils join the school with levels of prior attainment that are broadly average. By the time they leave, they have reached standards that are well above average. Total points scores at GCSE were significantly above the national average in 2007. In the same year, 72% of the pupils gained five or more A*-C grades at GCSE. The corresponding rate including GCSE mathematics and English was 59%, which is 13% above the national average. Pupils in Years 7 to 9, make outstanding progress, especially in mathematics and science. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to make good progress. Pupils with learning difficulties make outstanding progress because they are very well supported and reach their challenging learning targets. Overall, pupils have progressed much more quickly than similar pupils in similar schools have for the past three years. In 2006, the rate of progress made by pupils in English was in the top 1% of secondary schools nationally.

Teaching and learning are outstanding. Pupils are motivated and they know how to learn. They have excellent relationships with their teachers. They enjoy their work, take an interest and participate fully in lessons. Lessons are well planned with activities that are appropriate and varied. Information learning technology is used well. Learning is well paced with tasks differentiated to meet the needs of individuals. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils, set them challenging targets and ask them well-chosen questions to help to deepen their understanding. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly with helpful comments about how they can improve their work.

The school provides an excellent range of courses and other activities. In addition to the wide range of academic programmes offered for pupils, the school caters for the needs of all, for example, a vocational course in hairdressing and a GCSE media/arts course that pupils start in Year 9, are just two of many options on offer. However, the school recognises the need to extend the range of vocational choices that are available in Years 10 and 11. A particular strength of the school is its personal, social and health education provision, where pupils are encouraged

to voice their opinions in well-managed discussions. Enrichment education is excellent. Activities outside the classroom add significantly to pupils' enjoyment and general education. There are a vast number of clubs on offer, including many sporting activities. Music features highly and the school supports two orchestras and a jazz group.

The quality of both pastoral and academic support for pupils is outstanding. Pupils are very well cared for and there are thorough procedures to ensure they are safe. The few incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. One pupil commented, 'It's a safe school.' Child protection arrangements are robust and the school works very well with other agencies to support vulnerable pupils. Systems for supporting pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities and those for whom English is not their first language are very effective. This enables these pupils to make outstanding progress, in line with their peers. Pupils know their targets, which are reviewed regularly. They have a good understanding of the level they are working at, how well they are achieving at present and what it is they need to do in order to improve.

Leadership and management are outstanding. Senior and middle leaders work effectively to ensure that all pupils make outstanding progress. Equality and diversity are integral to the school community. Governors work effectively to support the work of the school and to act as 'critical friends'. The school's view of itself is broadly accurate, correctly identifying its particular strengths but, at the same time, honestly appraising areas where it can perform better. Lessons are observed routinely and the outcomes are accurate. However, feedback from lesson observations could be used more effectively to identify good practice and to support further improvements. Value added information is used to inform performance management for teachers and their professional development. The capacity for the school to improve further is good.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Students make outstanding progress compared to their prior attainment at GCSE during their time in the sixth form. Pass rates at AS and A level are high and most progress to university. The large majority complete and pass the courses they start. Teaching and learning are outstanding and students value the more mature approaches to learning that are used in their lessons. Students choose from a good range of AS and A level courses. Their options are enhanced by effective links with local further education colleges. There is also a one-year course for students who do not have the qualifications necessary to start A levels.

Students in the sixth form work hard to support younger pupils. They take on responsibilities throughout the school including organising enrichment activities for younger pupils, supporting teachers in lessons and, along with Year 11 girls, they facilitate the 'big sister' mentoring scheme. In short, they perform a crucial role in ensuring that the school community is safe and inclusive. The guidance and support they receive is outstanding. Students are grateful for the time that staff willingly provide to support their studies. Target grades are used effectively to monitor their progress and they are given excellent support to progress to university and employment. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding.

What the school should do to improve further

- Expand the range of course choices in Years 10 and 11 to provide more vocational opportunities.
- Develop the lesson observation scheme so that it becomes a more effective tool for quality improvement.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	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

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

¹ 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.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	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	1	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
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

30 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Girls' School, Barnet, EN5 5RR

I am writing on behalf of the inspection team to let you know the judgements we have made about your school. You told us many positive things about your school, particularly about the wide range of extra-curricular activities available and how the school is a safe, inclusive and cohesive community.

- We believe your school provides outstanding education for you.
- Most of you enjoy coming to school and feel safe while you are there.
- Staff and governors at the school make decisions in your best interests.
- You contribute particularly well to the life of the school and the local community.
- Sixth formers and Year 11 do a lot to help younger pupils.
- Outstanding teaching and the positive way you all respond, means you make excellent progress in lessons.
- You are also very well supported outside lessons.
- As a result, the large majority of you leave with better qualifications than similar pupils in most other schools.

In order to improve further, your school needs to:

- offer you more vocational course choices in Years 10 and 11.

Thank you for taking part in the inspection and by talking to us openly and honestly about your work and your life in school.

Yours sincerely

Sean Hanan

HMI