

Queensbury School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103616
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308363
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Judi Bedawi

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	243
6th form	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Bailey
Headteacher	John Higgins
Date of previous school inspection	19 November 2001
School address	Wood End Road Erdington Birmingham B24 8BL
Telephone number	01213 735731
Fax number	01213 826147

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Queensbury School provides for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs. The proportion of pupils entering school with autism, severe learning difficulties and more complex needs is increasing. Most pupils are of White British background with a small number of minority ethnic pupils including some at the early stages of learning English. Most experience high levels of deprivation. There are far more boys than girls. Some pupils travel across the city to attend, with long daily journeys. The current leadership team, including the headteacher, were all appointed in 2007. Plans are in hand to relocate the school in the not too distant future

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Queensbury is a satisfactory and improving school that cares well for its pupils and promotes their welfare and racial harmony effectively. They say, 'It is a happy school where it is easy to make friends'. The new headteacher provides a strong lead, empowering and nurturing his staff's skills, so that there is an enthusiastic team spirit and determination that the school will continue to improve as the pupil intake changes. The school evaluates itself as being good. The Inspection found that most aspects of school performance are satisfactory and that the school has not taken into account sufficiently the relative performance of different groups of pupils. Although pupils make satisfactory progress, some make good progress. Sixth form provision is good.

Standards are well below the national average in Years 7 to 11, reflecting the changing nature of the school's intake. Most pupils gain steadily from a very low starting point and there is improving performance in GCSE and other qualifications. However, learning activities are not always fully effective because assessment data are not used effectively enough to pinpoint individual needs, and with pupils sometimes unsure of their targets and next steps in their learning. As a result, some pupils do better than others, with higher attainers and a few gifted and talented pupils making better progress than lower attainers and those with autism. Girls do not do as well as boys in lessons or exams.

Pupils say they are well prepared for future work and are proud of their achievements, as are their parents and carers. Behaviour and attendance are both improving. Pupils behave well in lessons but a few do not manage their own behaviour well at break times. They particularly enjoy 'hands on' learning and have good relationships with their teachers. Pupils with autism are fully involved, although strategies used in the classroom are not fully effective in meeting their individual needs. They find moving to different rooms and teachers a considerable challenge. Although the curriculum is soundly based on basic skills, the school knows it is not fully adapted to meet the needs of pupils with autism. Enrichment activities enhance pupils' life experiences well. Pupils are well cared for although academic guidance is not as strong. Leaders, governors and managers have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, the monitoring of progress data is not thorough enough in its focus on the progress made by different groups of pupils.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

Standards are well below the national average, but achievement is good because the vocational learning curriculum meets students' abilities, interests and aspirations. All students gain qualifications before entering further education, training or work. Their attendance, attitudes and behaviour are good. Students are caring, responsible and independent young citizens, setting a good example to younger pupils. Provision and use of partnerships to support work experience, careers education and preparation for students' future working life are particularly strong.

Staff manage the logistical difficulties caused by the poor accommodation well, so there is the least possible impact on teaching and learning. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good with the former post holder supporting the new head of sixth form as he settles in.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the way that governors, leaders and managers at all levels monitor, analyse and regularly review progress data, and use the information gained to ensure that all groups make consistently good progress.
- Ensure teachers make full use of data and target setting to match learning activities more closely to pupils' needs including those of lower attainers and girls.
- Improve provision for pupils with autism by developing strategies that specifically meet the individual needs of pupils.
- Develop strategies to ensure that a small minority of pupils are better able to control their own behaviour during break times.

A small proportion of schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are well below national averages but pupils make satisfactory progress overall, given the nature of their needs, school context and attainment on entry. Some pupils do better than others because learning activities match their needs better. Higher attainers do better than lower attainers and pupils with autism. Year 9 national test scores in mathematics and science show an upward trend over the last three years. However, data very clearly show that younger pupils are now working at lower levels, particularly in English, due to their greater needs. Higher attaining pupils show their good progress with increased success at Entry level, GCSE and in NVQ Level 1 examinations. In 2007, 41% of Year 11 achieved at least one grade A*-G GCSE and all pupils gained at least one entry level certificate, a steady upward trend over the past three years. The school is proud of a B grade achieved in GCSE art. Analysis of Year 11 examination results between 2005 and 2007 shows that girls are not achieving as well as boys. Inspection evidence indicates that some girls participate reluctantly in lessons. The achievement of sixth form students is good. The vocational work related programme meets their needs, so that they leave school well qualified for life in the wider community.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most pupils develop a good community spirit and show a willingness to help others less fortunate than themselves. The school council is an increasingly powerful body. They take pride in raising funds and making decisions such as deciding to recycle paper and lobbying for a healthy tuck shop.

Most pupils as a result choose healthier options. They are well aware of the dangers of smoking and drug taking. Pupils and sixth form students develop a good awareness of living within a multicultural community through their experience of the diverse nature of the school community. They display respect for each other, encouraged by the clear set of social and moral standards set by the school. Pupils are well prepared for the world of work through, for example, the

many work experience placements, college links and mini-enterprise schemes. Most develop good team and leadership skills as a result.

The pupils recognise that the school is helping them to improve their behaviour and attitudes. One pupil displayed a typical attitude in saying, 'I have been silly today but I am sorry now'. The majority of pupils enjoy learning and come to school regularly, but a few still struggle to maintain good behaviour around the school especially in their free time. This in turn sometimes disturbs the free time of others. Some girls appear to lack confidence to contribute in lessons. Increasingly because of the good support the pupils receive, they are making more sensible and safer choices such as deciding not to smoke.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching is sound overall with some that is good. Teamwork, capable teaching assistants and relationships between pupils and teachers are strengths. Keen subject knowledge and appropriate questioning encourage many pupils to respond with careful answers, effectively reinforcing speaking skills. However, strategies used do not fully engage all girls in lessons, although some more confident girls do participate effectively. Teachers manage behaviour well using strategies that pupils respect. Lack of pace and overuse of worksheets sometimes leads to pupils losing interest and concentration. Higher attaining pupils are consistently well challenged but other groups, including lower attainers are not. Assessment data are well used in planning activities for higher attainers. They are not consistently well used to meet the needs of lower attainers. Teachers do not use a sufficiently wide range of strategies and resources to meet the highly individual needs of pupils with autism, who sometimes struggle to cope in class. They do better in small group practical activities where there is more one-to-one support. Specialist teaching for pupils with a first language other than English is good, carefully targeted to meet increasing demand. The learning mentors work well to help vulnerable pupils. Sixth form relationships between teachers, assistants and students are positive. Teaching is good, effectively blending core skills and examination study with practical work. Related off-site teaching enhances learning, making good use of a number of strong partnerships. Students say, 'We feel we are being well prepared for college'.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The broadly balanced curriculum offers a suitable range of subjects that meet national curriculum requirements. Provision for art and physical education is good.

The curriculum is not sufficiently adapted to fully meet the very specific needs of all pupils with autism. Pupils relish practical work in textiles and design and technology. Personal, social and health education offers good support for community living. A good range of enrichment activities includes outdoor pursuits, residential trips and sporting activities like cricket and canoeing, which are greatly enjoyed by pupils and help them to be healthy. Coaches from Aston Villa Football Club help pupils to improve their skills. Links with local schools in drama and information and communication technology widen learning opportunities. The sixth form

curriculum is good and matches students' needs well, including offering a good range of options, such as photography and good links with local colleges and employers such as a national DIY chain.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The headteacher sets the tone for the caring and supportive atmosphere around the school. Teachers and learning mentors are highly committed to meeting the personal needs of all groups of pupils. The majority of parents and carers are confident that their children are well cared for. A very few parents raised concerns about safety issues but inspection evidence shows that the pupils are safe, not least because the 'walk about staff teams' are vigilant. Pupils say, 'We feel very safe.' Safeguarding procedures are robust. Pupils have a firm and secure foundation for learning and improved behaviour. Routines are well established and because behaviour is monitored carefully, the number of serious incidents has drastically reduced. However, the school is aware that even more could be done to guide a few pupils to behave more sensibly at playtimes. Vulnerable pupils, including those with eating disorders, receive the right sort of help and counselling to help them overcome their personal difficulties and help them to make safer and more sensible lifestyle decisions. There are many good links with specialist external agencies and health professionals such as speech therapists. However, the staff are not fully confident in knowing how best to support and guide the increasing number of pupils with autism starting in the school with more complex needs.

Marking is undertaken alongside pupils and guides learning well, and some pupils are becoming more confident to assess their own learning. However, individual learning targets set are not always precise enough to help pupils recognise their next learning steps to help support better progress. Sixth form students receive good advice and guidance about their future options.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The new headteacher has developed an effective leadership team, focused on securing improvement, fully supported by the governing body. The school's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Sixth form provision is well managed and has been developed to meet students' needs well, enabling them to make good progress. Similarly, higher attainers throughout the school do well, with improved performance.

Improvements in attendance and behaviour are having a positive impact on teaching and learning. However, some pupils do not do as well as others, especially lower attainers and pupils with autism. Although the school has a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and weaknesses, its use of data is not sufficiently refined to analyse and compare the progress and performance of different pupil groups. Targets are adequately challenging but are not having sufficient impact on the performance of groups that could be doing better. Governors do not yet have sufficient data to ask searching questions and hold the school fully to account. There is a strong emphasis on continued professional development, with all staff and governors encouraged to improve their skills. However, this has not fully kept pace with the more diverse

range of needs of pupils entering the school. Financial management is secure, as shown by careful planning to purchase recently erected mobile classrooms.

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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?	3	2
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?	3	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	3	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	3	
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	2	

The quality of provision

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

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?	3	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
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

20 September 2007

Dear Pupils and Sixth Form Students

Inspection of Queensbury School, Erdington, Birmingham. B24 8BL

You made us very welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you. Thank you for telling us so much about what you do at school.

- We think that your school is satisfactory and getting better. Although you are all making satisfactory progress in your learning, some of you are making better progress than others. The way your school is run and the activities provided for you are satisfactory. We know that Mr Higgins and your teachers are working hard to make more improvements. You can also help them. We can see that everyone in the school takes good care of you although you are not always sure of your learning targets. You like your teachers, and especially like art lessons and playing football with your friends. We know that some of you do not like big classes. We think that you are polite and helpful, and making satisfactory progress in your personal development as well as in your learning. You have a good sixth form where you make good progress. It does a good job in helping you to decide what to do when you leave school.
- We want Mr Higgins and the governors to make sure that they regularly check the way that learning information is used to help you all make good progress.
- We have asked your teachers to make sure that your learning activities meet all of your learning needs and to involve girls more.
- We have asked Mr Higgins if he can think how to help those of you who do not enjoy big classes to learn even better.
- We expect you to get even better at coming to school and to make sure that you always behave nicely to each other at break times.

We hope that you continue to do well and enjoy your time at Queensbury School.

Best wishes

Judi Bedawi Lead inspector

Annex B



20 September 2007

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