

Queen's Park High School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	111397
Local Authority	Cheshire
Inspection number	310589
Inspection dates	16–17 April 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Chambers HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	909
6th form	165
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr P Whitby
Headteacher	Mr A Firman
Date of previous school inspection	4 October 2004
School address	Queen's Park Chester Cheshire CH4 7AE
Telephone number	1244 675468
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Age group	11–18
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Amended Report Addendum

Most students say they enjoy school, but in a few lessons some remain passive and a small minority display poor attitudes to learning

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Queen's Park is an average-sized school with slightly more girls than boys on roll. The school population was affected by the closure of another local school in 2006, resulting in an unusually high number of students joining in years other than Year 7. The number of students joining the school at the beginning of Year 7 has declined in the last two years but is due to rise again in 2008. Students come from areas with a wide range of socio-economic circumstances and the proportion entitled to free school meals is above average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. Over 86% of the students are of White British heritage. The remainder of the school population contains small numbers of students from several different minority ethnic groups. The proportion of students with English as an additional language is higher than in most schools and is growing, but few students are at an early stage of learning English. The school has specialist status in visual arts and holds Investors in People, Healthy Schools, Artsmark Gold, International Schools and Eco-school Silver awards.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Queen's Park is a good school that provides good value for money. It is an inclusive school, which is successful in meeting the complex individual needs of a wide range of students. It does this through effectively working in partnership with others to provide the support and guidance that promote students' well-being.

Students benefit from good opportunities to study an appropriate range of courses, including a wide range of academic and vocational options at Key Stage 4. An increased emphasis on personalised learning is helping to develop the curriculum further. This has a positive impact on motivation for many individuals. For example, gifted and talented students can attend a portrait painting workshop or undertake group projects which allow them to take on additional responsibilities and enjoy their work more.

Standards are broadly in line with national averages. Achievement is good because the vast majority of students make good gains in their learning. A well-structured and extensive programme of guidance supports students in their learning and contributes strongly to the good progress that they make. Teachers use a variety of classroom approaches that help to engage students in their work. Teaching is often good, but the day-to-day marking of students' work is inconsistent and homework is not used regularly in some subjects. As a result, teachers miss opportunities to reinforce the good overall guidance that students receive and students are not always able to consolidate the learning from lessons.

Students' personal development is satisfactory. A range of opportunities promotes good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Outstanding work in the visual arts contributes significantly to students' spiritual and cultural awareness and the school has strong international links. Students feel safe in school and know that members of staff are always ready to listen to their concerns. Attendance is below average but in line with that of similar schools. The school works hard to address the needs of a small core of persistent non-attenders and its initiatives have had some measure of success. Students' behaviour is satisfactory. Most students behave well, but a small minority show poor attitudes to work and cause low-level disruption in lessons.

The school is well led and managed. Leaders set clear direction and have an unerring focus on raising standards and promoting the well-being of students. The benefits of the school's specialist status in visual arts are considerable. Provision within the visual arts is outstanding and students' achievement in art and design is very strong. Students appreciate the excellent display work around the school and benefit from having an artist in residence. The introduction of cross-curricular projects is enabling good practice in the arts to influence other areas. Managers at all levels are beginning to use data successfully to analyse performance, monitor students' progress and drive up standards. However, the rigour with which managers monitor the performance of individual teachers is variable and this has contributed to weaknesses in marking and setting regular homework. The quality of self-evaluation is satisfactory overall. The school shows good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

This is a good sixth form where students achieve well and standards are consistently above average. Just over half of Year 11 students choose to continue their studies into the sixth form

and a small number of additional students join from other local schools. Retention levels are high. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and display good attitudes to work. The quality of teaching and learning is good; teachers know their subjects well and are regarded as very approachable. The sixth form is well led and managed. For example, a recent project to survey students' views is helping managers to monitor provision over time. Students receive good guidance about how to improve their work and about transfer to university, training or employment. They benefit from the opportunity to study a wide variety of A-level courses, together with a limited number of vocational and other options. Collaboration with local schools is developing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the rigour and consistency of how managers monitor teaching, learning and assessment.
- Ensure that regular marking helps students to improve.
- Make more regular and effective use of homework.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards are average and students' achievement is good. Standards in both key stages have remained steady in recent years. Results in national tests at the end of Key Stage 3 are below average. In Key Stage 4 standards are broadly average. Overall, students make good gains in their learning. They enter the school with attainment that is slightly below national expectations for their age. Although a very small number of students show poor attitudes and achieve little, most students make more progress than would be expected. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and as a result they too achieve well. Overall achievement is good, but the school's challenging targets have not always been met. Staffing problems which contributed to students' underachievement in English in 2006 and 2007 have now been resolved, and current students are making progress that is in line with that in other subjects.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development is satisfactory overall. Attendance is below average, but is improving as a result of a range of effective strategies. The school provides a safe and secure environment and students feel that if bullying occurs it is dealt with effectively. Most students say they enjoy school, but in a few lessons some remain passive and a small minority display poor attitudes to learning. A significant minority of parents are concerned about behaviour. The behaviour observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall and most students behave well in lessons and around the school. However, in lessons where expectations are low and routines are not clear, some students disrupt the flow of the lesson and hinder progress. Students are involved in a wide range of opportunities to contribute to the life of the school and the community through clubs and charitable efforts. The school works hard to promote the importance of exercise and an appropriate diet, and students are beginning to adopt healthy lifestyles. The student council is well run and is effectively representing students' concerns and ideas. For example, students have played a full role in recent improvements to the building and

student facilities. Progress in their key skills and the use of enterprise activities are helping students to develop a range of skills that contribute well to their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Many examples of good or better teaching were seen during the inspection and, where teachers used their good subject knowledge and conveyed high expectations, learning was particularly effective. The best lessons move learning along at a good pace with a variety of interesting activities that provide challenge for all students and promote full engagement. Teachers make good use of additional classroom support in meeting the needs of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. In weaker lessons, teachers do not cater sufficiently for the needs of different groups or individuals in the class and opportunities to consolidate learning through homework are missed. A large majority of students show positive attitudes to their work and as a result they make good progress. Students are becoming more involved in their own learning and this is leading to improved engagement.

Teachers mark tests and assignments regularly and provide students with appropriate guidance on how well they are doing and how to improve. However, other marking and the monitoring of students' classwork are inconsistent and fail to provide the regular reinforcement that would help to raise standards further. Regular and effective communication with parents and carers promotes good home-school relationships and helps to support students in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school provides a good curriculum which meets statutory requirements. In Key Stage 4, the school offers a broad range of options including academic and vocational subjects. The curriculum is kept under review to ensure that it continues to meet the aspirations of all students. Students value the opportunities they have: a group of Year 11 students recently contributed to a meeting for local headteachers to express their appreciation of the flexible curriculum on offer. The school's specialist status is reflected in the opportunity for students to study GCSE photography in addition to art and design. An increased emphasis on work-related learning and vocational education ensures that students are fully prepared to meet the challenges of life after school. Effective links with local schools and colleges help to tailor courses of study for students who are at risk of disaffection. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including some with national and international dimensions, further enrich the students' experiences. Extra-curricular provision is particularly strong in art and sport, where students benefit from many opportunities to develop their skills in areas of interest.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. There is a clear commitment to inclusion that is shared by all staff. This was very well demonstrated when a local school closed recently

and many students transferred to Queen's Park. The sensitive and careful way that the new students were integrated into the school drew praise from many quarters. Staff working in the new student support faculty provide well-coordinated care and support. This faculty is a powerful example of how well the integration of a wide range of staff working with different agencies can respond effectively to the needs of individual students. Exclusions are declining as a result of more effective intervention. Year learning managers know the students in their care very well and are effectively tracking progress and welfare. Liaison with students' parents and carers is strong. In their academic work, students generally know their target grades or levels and have an overview of how to improve their work. Regular review days involve students and parents in reflecting on progress and concerns alongside group tutors. Vulnerable students, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number in public care are very well supported, ensuring that they do well and gain confidence. Students receive effective guidance when making choices at times of transition, and Year 7 students settle happily and quickly into secondary school life. The personal, social, health and careers education programme is a very effective vehicle for many aspects of students' personal development. Careers advice is very effective and students appreciate the high degree of guidance they receive when choosing post-16 courses or training. Child protection procedures are robust and clearly understood by all staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of leadership and management is good. The headteacher has the respect of his colleagues and leads a team that is committed to providing high quality education for all students. Leaders and managers set clear direction with the expectation that all students, whatever their abilities and backgrounds, should be given opportunities to achieve success. Faculty team leaders and year learning managers play key roles in this school. They appreciate being able to influence school policy and welcome improved opportunities to share ideas. They are involved in whole school self-evaluation and, more recently, in evaluating the work within faculties. However, the monitoring of performance within faculties varies in rigour and there are too many instances of unmarked work or lack of homework going unchallenged.

A system for the setting of targets has been improved to ensure that there are appropriate levels of challenge, although its effectiveness in terms of raising standards has not yet been fully realised. Most students are aware of their target grades but some are not aware of how they were determined. Governors are involved in the life of the school and satisfactorily discharge their statutory responsibilities. They have welcomed the opportunity to share in-service training with teachers and to serve alongside senior managers as part of the committee structure. The chair of governors has regular meetings with the headteacher and is valued as a critical friend. The school has good systems in place for managing its finances. The bursar, headteacher, senior leaders and governors work well together to minimise the impact of changes in revenue caused by fluctuating rolls. Resources are deployed well and the school provides good value for money.

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

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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?	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?	2	2
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 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?	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
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, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of Queen's Park High School, Chester, CH4 7AE

You will recall that a team of inspectors and I recently inspected your school. This letter is to tell you about what we found. We enjoyed meeting you and I would like to particularly thank those of you in the groups that we met at lunchtime.

We found Queen's Park to be a good school. Teachers and other staff support you well, both in your learning and your personal development. Standards are broadly in line with national averages. Most of you make good gains in your learning. You told us that you feel safe in school and know that members of staff are always ready to listen to your concerns. Most of you behave well, but a small minority show poor attitudes to work and sometimes disrupt lessons.

We were impressed by the way that your school's specialist status in visual arts contributes to your experience at school. The excellent quality of your art work is evident around the school and in your examination results. Your school is well led and managed. In order to improve the school further, I have asked the headteacher, staff and governors to undertake the following.

- Ensure that senior staff monitor the teaching and assessments that you get.
- Ensure that marking helps you to improve.
- Make more regular and effective use of homework.

You can help to improve the school by trying your very best in lessons and doing all the homework that you are set.