

Queen Mary's Grammar School

Inspection report - amended

Unique Reference Number	104262
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	324006
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Mark Sims HMI

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School (total)	722
Sixth form	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Nowell
Headteacher	Tim Swain
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
School address	Sutton Road Walsall WS1 2PG
Telephone number	01922 720696
Fax number	01922 725932

Age group	11–18
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Amended Report Addendum

Report amended due to a change to the report following a complaint

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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 Mary's Grammar School is a selective boys' school, which takes an increasing number of girls into the sixth form. It has been designated a specialist languages college since 2002 and more recently acquired the status of a business and enterprise college. The school holds an International Schools award from the Department for Children, Schools and Families and has a Healthy Schools award.

The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is very low compared to the national average, as is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Over half of the students are from minority ethnic groups. Whilst many pupils can speak languages other than English, none are at the earliest stages of learning English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The overall effectiveness of the school is outstanding. In the short time since his appointment, the headteacher's drive and vision are having a significant impact on the life of the school. Standards, which are already very high, are continuing to rise as more students achieve the very highest grades. Although most students arrive at the school already having achieved very high levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2, they go on to make outstanding progress throughout their time in school so that by the time they leave, standards are exceptionally high.

Much of the reason for this high achievement is students' very high motivation for self-study and wanting to do well, as seen in their outstanding level of personal development. The school encourages and develops this by ensuring they have many opportunities for taking responsibility for their own learning. The outstanding range of extra-curricular opportunities enhances this and students are well served by the challenging courses, which motivate them to succeed. The majority of teaching is at good but the combination of students' attitudes and the wide range of curriculum experiences and support they receive ensures that their learning is excellent. Planning of lessons does not consistently take account of the needs of different groups but students still go on to achieve very well. Students are not always well informed as to how well they are doing and how to improve.

Care, guidance and support are good. Students are given every encouragement to do well in their tests and examinations. The tracking of individual students' progress is developing well but this is not fully established in all subject departments. One of the headteacher's early priorities has been to ensure that senior and subject leaders play a greater role in monitoring and evaluating the performance of subjects. He has successfully ensured that there is a greater shared responsibility among senior leaders in the school and with the governing body.

The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection and gives outstanding value for money. It has excellent capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is outstanding. It is well led and this ensures that the successes students achieve by the end of Key Stage 4 are built on. The support for students is very strong, including that for the increasing number of girls who join in Year 12. Levels of achievement and attainment are exceptionally high. Students in the sixth form are given a range of opportunities to take responsibilities and to act as mentors for younger students. They are playing an increasingly greater role in the community. Teaching is good and by the time they join the sixth form, students' motivation for self-study is very well developed, enabling them to do exceptionally well. Whilst the range of curriculum subjects is not wide, it is appropriate to the needs and interests of students, and the school is always flexible in dropping or adding additional courses as demand increases or declines.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop the role of subject leaders to ensure they are more involved in the monitoring and evaluation of their subjects.

- Raise the quality of teaching to ensure more is outstanding by improving the quality of written feedback to students and improving the consistency of planning to ensure the needs of all students are met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Students' attainment on entry to the school is very high. Most students are highly motivated and keen to succeed. This, together with good teaching, ensures they make outstanding progress across all year groups in Key Stages 3 and 4. Students reach very high levels of attainment in the national tests in Year 9, and over four-fifths of students attained five or more A* or A grades in their 2008 GCSE examinations, a significant increase on 2007.

Students make outstanding progress in the sixth form, particularly at AS level. In A level subjects, although there is some variation in rates of progress across subjects, most students make rapid progress resulting in very high levels of attainment. There are no significant differences in levels of achievement or attainment between different groups of learners.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The quality of students' personal development and well-being is outstanding. They are enabled to learn in a safe and well-ordered environment. Students' levels of understanding of cultural diversity are good, particularly where they are based upon what students learn from each other. Likewise, opportunities to develop spiritual awareness are good. Students' social and moral development is an outstanding strength within the school. Students benefit from opportunities to guide and mentor each other's personal and academic development. Highly considerate behaviour and very positive attitudes do much to provide a classroom climate in which cooperative learning takes place. Students from different ethnic groups confirmed that relationships between groups of students are very strong and incidences of racism are minimal. A strong anti-bullying policy ensures that incidences of bullying are low. Students report that such incidents are dealt with appropriately when they do occur. They also say that how much they enjoy most of their lessons and their time in school and this is confirmed overwhelmingly by parents.

Students contribute to their community in many ways, for example through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The Combined Cadet Force, the prefect system and the school council develop students' team working skills and ability to contribute to the school community. Students' views are taken seriously through surveys and focus groups, for example, leading to changes in the school's code of conduct and sanctions arrangements. Attendance has improved steadily and is well above the national average. Students are very well informed about healthy lifestyles and take exercise mainly through competitive team games. High levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy and numerous opportunities presented through the school's specialism in enterprise and business ensure that students are extremely well prepared for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good and learning is outstanding, due to students' high levels of motivation, their keenness for success and high levels of independent learning, which the school has promoted and encouraged. Where teachers inspire students with stimulating and well-matched activities and lessons are delivered enthusiastically, lessons are outstanding. Here, teachers have high expectations and challenge students to achieve at the very highest levels. In mathematics and physics, for example, high expectations and expert guidance on what to do to improve ensured that students made excellent progress in their understanding. In English lessons, opportunities for students to work independently enabled them to develop their knowledge and skills very well. Where teaching is good, resources are used imaginatively to extend learning, students are clear about their progress and teachers provide verbal feedback indicating clearly what students need to do to improve. There are, however, a minority of lessons where the teaching is insufficiently inspiring or creative, the pace of learning slows and individual students' needs are not always met. These lessons do not sufficiently stimulate students and yet, because of their high degree of self-motivation, students still learn rapidly.

Students enjoy lessons and most of the older students understand the level at which they are working, but marking of students' work is variable. Written feedback does not consistently indicate the level at which they are working, how well they have achieved or what they have to do to improve. The planning of lessons is generally good, although in a few instances it does not pay sufficient attention to meeting the needs of all students and is inconsistent across departments.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Though largely academic, the school's curriculum meets the needs of all of its students very well. The Language College specialism enables the school to its students through the provision of a number of after-school community language courses. In the sixth form, provision is improved by offering A levels in three different languages and business studies. Local primary schools benefit from the specialist language teachers who provide lessons for them on a regular basis.

The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been enhanced because the school encourages the students to learn independently. A significant number of students enter for their GCSE in mathematics and ICT one year early, with many students attaining A grades. This enables them to study more advanced courses in Year 11, providing a very secure base for their studies in the sixth form. Many parents and students have commented on the very good range of extra-curricular provision that is very well supported. Musical and drama productions, trips in this country and abroad and a full range of sporting activities significantly enhance the confidence and personal development of the students.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral staff have a thorough knowledge of individual students' needs and scrutinise their academic progress carefully. The very small number of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are closely monitored and their requirements are well known. The school ensures

that the work of a range of professionals and outside agencies is coordinated very well to provide effective support for students. At the time of the inspection, the school demonstrated that the arrangements for safeguarding of students were in place.

The tracking system used by the school enables underachievement to be identified but there is a lack of consistency across the subjects about how data is used to improve standards further. Students spoke highly about the guidance they received concerning options, future careers and further education. They are aware of their academic targets but some are given insufficient guidance on how to attain them. There are also excellent links with the local authority and a range of businesses through its business and enterprise specialism.

Parents commented on the successful management of the transition between the primary and secondary schools, and the arrangements for informing parents about their children's progress through reports and review meetings are good. Although the great majority of parents were highly satisfied, a small minority reported that they did not feel sufficiently informed and consulted.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The newly appointed headteacher is providing outstanding leadership and direction for the school. He knows the strengths and areas for development well and has already put in place measures to strengthen the senior leadership team by reducing their teaching responsibilities and enhancing their role as leaders in the school. The senior leadership team have a shared sense of the headteacher's vision. According to one parent, 'The vision the headteacher shares with the staff and transmitted to the parents is being put into action and progress made.'

The school has raised standards and achievement by encouraging strong personal development of students, so that they have positive attitudes to their learning. The headteacher rightly states, 'The school has provided opportunities for students to stretch themselves.'

There is some inconsistency in the quality of subject leadership, where not all are routinely involved in monitoring and evaluating the provision and outcomes in their subjects. Most subject leaders lead by example in the outstanding quality of their teaching, although this is not always disseminated sufficiently throughout their departments.

Governors have played a strategic role in the appointment of the headteacher and are committed to the school making further improvements. The school's promotion of community cohesion is good and the school's dual subject specialisms in languages and business and enterprise are playing a key role. Links with local primary schools are excellent and the school is looking increasingly outwards towards the international community through links with China. The school is looking at how it can draw further on the increasing linguistic and cultural diversity of its students.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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	1	1

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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	2	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	
The attendance of learners	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
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	1	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
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?	2	2

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	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	2	
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**

21 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall WS1 2PG

You will know that we recently visited your school and I thought that you would like to know what we have said in our report. Firstly, can I thank those of you who took time to talk to us in meetings, lessons or around the building, which helped us come to some of our judgements about the school.

We think that overall you go to an outstanding school. The results you achieve in tests and examinations and the progress you make during your time at Queen Mary's are outstanding. You have demonstrated how highly motivated you are to learn and how you apply yourselves to your work in all lessons. You are able to take responsibility for your own learning, which you do in an environment that is safe and largely free of any oppressive behaviour. Many of you and your parents have said how fortunate you are to benefit from such an extensive range of high quality extra-curricular activities.

Since your new headteacher took up his post at the start of term, he has given the whole community clear direction to take the school further and has agreed with us on a couple of issues which we think will help the school get even better:

- Enhance the role of your subject leaders so that they are all regularly involved in checking how well each subject is doing and how it can improve.
- Make sure more of the lessons match the quality of the very best ones so that work meets your needs better and more of you have clear written feedback on how well you are doing and how you can improve.

I would like to thank you again for making us so welcome and I am sure you will all play your part in helping the school improve further.

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims

Her Majesty's Inspector