

# Queen Elizabeth School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112438
<b>Local Authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	325608
<b>Inspection date</b>	21 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Moira Fitzpatrick

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>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Foundation
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1408
Sixth form	345
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Ty Power
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Christopher Clarke
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	Kirkby Lonsdale Cumbria LA6 2HJ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01524 271275
<b>Fax number</b>	01524 272863

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- the impact of care, guidance and support upon standards and students' achievement
- the breadth and suitability of the curriculum, including the school's specialisms, in meeting the needs, interests and ambitions of students
- the involvement and contribution of leaders at all levels in developing the school.

The inspectors gathered evidence from lesson observations, students' work, school documents, including tracking data and examination results. Discussions were held with school staff, governors and students. Over 400 parents returned questionnaires and the views expressed were taken into account. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own judgements as given in its self-evaluation were not justified. These have been included in this report where appropriate.

## Description of the school

This very popular over-subscribed school is larger than average. The socio-economic circumstances of students are generally above average. Students travel to the school from three counties, encompassing a wide rural area. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below average. So too is the proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The vast majority of students are from White British heritage; very few students speak English as an additional language. The attainment of students when they join the school in Year 7 is usually slightly above average, more so in science than in English and mathematics. The school holds specialist status for the arts, modern foreign languages and as a Training School. The school also holds accreditations for Healthy Schools, Artsmark and International School status.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This outstanding school fully lives up to its ancient motto of 'Scholarship and Care'. The excellence that the school achieves results from the equal emphasis given to each of these aspects of its work. Parents and students are overwhelming in their praise of the school and many count themselves fortunate to be a part of it. Pressure for places is high because of the school's excellent reputation in the locality and further afield.

Standards are very high and achievement is outstanding. Since the last inspection standards have continued to rise, and GCSE unvalidated results for 2008, the best ever for the school, are significantly above the national average on all measures. They are particularly impressive in the percentage of students gaining five or more subjects at A\* to C grades, including English and mathematics. Many individual subjects exceed the national average at A\* and A grades in the 2007 results, notably science, drama, music, English, French and design and technology. A slight dip in performance at Key Stage 3 in 2007 attracted the school's typical robust and effective response so that performance at all levels rose significantly in 2008, and especially at the highest Level 7. Students of all abilities and backgrounds do exceptionally well by the end of Year 11 because of the school's excellent care, guidance, support and inclusion practices. These provide absolutely the closest match to students' specific needs that can be achieved by flexibility and relentless planning. Any sign of underachievement is picked up very quickly through the school's meticulous monitoring of students' progress. Learning is tracked constantly through thorough systems that are continually improving as middle leaders refine their use. Students are extremely well cared for, supported and guided in both their learning and their personal development. Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet all regulations. Parents are delighted with the 'excellent' care and support provided for their children, for example, parents of Year 7 students report how quickly and well their children have settled 'happily' into school.

Students' excellent progress is based on outstanding teaching and learning. The 'Training School' status provides an excellent platform for the professional development of staff by bringing new opportunities and teaching methods into the school. Teachers' very good subject knowledge, combined with their enthusiasm, provides lessons with high levels of challenge that interest and motivate students to work hard and succeed. Lessons move at a brisk pace because of teachers' high expectations and students' eagerness to keep up. Teachers' questioning is of a very high order and is used very well to develop and extend students' thinking. Students have great affection for their teachers and are proud to be part of such a highly regarded school. Some say this spurs them on to work hard because they know that being part of Queen Elizabeth's means 'you are expected to succeed and achieve your very best'. Teachers' use of modern technologies, including computers and video clips, makes learning more vivid and provides numerous opportunities for students to develop their independence as learners and work at their own best rate. Excellent relationships exist between teachers and students. These give students confidence to ask questions and take risks with answers, confident that they will be listened to and respected.

Students of all ages say that they have an excellent curriculum and inspectors agree. The school's specialist status has been significant in developing new and exciting courses for students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Students in these year groups cannot praise the school highly enough for the way their individual needs have been met. Typically they say that the school has, 'gone the extra mile' and, 'they never give up looking for a solution'. Students feel they have been extremely well supported to make the right decisions and are delighted to have

the scope to 'create' a mix of courses so they have access to both academic and work-based learning. Links with neighbouring institutions through the South Lakes Federation, combined with imaginative developments within and between subjects, have led to leading edge developments in the construction of courses for all age groups. Provision for extra-curricular activities is outstanding and the take up is very high. Through these activities students have many opportunities for community involvement in sport, music and the performing arts. Cultural visits overseas, as well as frequent well planned visits for field work further enrich students' learning and extend their horizons.

Students' high academic achievement is well matched by their outstanding personal development. Students enjoy school, their behaviour is exemplary and attendance is excellent. They form warm and trusting relationships with each other and are very supportive of each other's learning. They show high levels of respect for themselves and others and create a calm, civilised environment. Students say they feel safe and well cared for and that any occasional incidents of bullying or harassment are swiftly and effectively dealt with. School records support this view. A very effective personal, social and health education programme prepares students extremely well for the challenge of life in the modern world. Students know how to lead healthy lives, participating in a wide range of sports and taking advantage of the school's excellent range of healthy foods at lunchtime. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, reflecting the impact of the rich and varied curriculum. This gives them a very good understanding of the diversity of society, their responsibilities as good citizens and an awareness of global and environmental issues. The school expects students to be active members of its community and provides them with many opportunities to take on responsibilities which they seize with enthusiasm. The school council is a force for change in the school and every year has a fresh set of improvements to its credit. At each stage during their time in the school, students are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of learning and life.

The school is at the heart of the community and welcomes its role in providing opportunities for leisure and learning, especially in sport and the arts. Through these and the close involvement of students and staff in a wealth of community activities, the school makes an excellent contribution to community cohesion. The school seeks and achieves its aim of instilling in its students a coherent set of core values which shape their conduct towards themselves and others.

The inspirational headteacher leads an exceptional team of senior managers who have a very clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and where it should improve. Leadership is distributed to all who are a part of the school, so that students, parents, staff and governors have plenty of opportunity to contribute to the school's continual improvement. Morale is very high and support for the school's aims is evident in the work of all members of the school's community. The rigour of leadership and management at all levels, and the powerful impact of the school's specialist arts and modern languages status on curriculum developments, move the school forward at a cracking pace. A wealth of data and highly effective tracking systems are used very well to set and meet the very challenging targets that the school sets for itself. Resources are very effectively used to continually improve accommodation and provision so that the school offers excellent value for money. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection; the capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 1**

This outstanding sixth form offers students exceptional opportunities. It is growing in popularity. High proportions of Year 11 students choose to continue their studies in the sixth form and are joined by significant numbers from other schools. Its reputation is deservedly high because students are given every opportunity to do well and are provided with notable teaching, care and support.

In 2008, results for both Advanced Supplementary (AS) and Advanced Level (A2) examinations were exceptionally high, maintaining the improving trend since the last inspection, and providing the school with its best ever results for the second year running. Virtually all students successfully complete their courses and are able to access their higher education and career ambitions. The overall pass rate is high, with more than half A2 passes at A or B grades, a much higher proportion than is usually found. Given their typical attainment on entry to the sixth form, students' overall achievement and progress on all courses are of the highest order.

The quality of teaching is outstanding. It is lively, challenging, and engaging, and fosters students' independence and responsibility in their learning. Students respond very well. They have mature attitudes to their studies and are very keen to succeed.

Students are very enthusiastic about the sixth form and are highly committed to the school and its values. They consider that they get a good deal. They value the very good choice of courses and the superb level of personal and academic support they receive from their tutors and subject teachers. This, combined with the high quality teaching and learning, ensures that nearly all students who embark on courses in Year 12 see them through to completion.

Students' personal development is outstanding, and is nurtured well by a carefully constructed guidance programme. Meticulous tracking of progress means students understand how well they are doing, and where they need to improve. They know that support is available should they encounter difficulties. As a result, they become extremely enthusiastic and confident learners who enjoy being in the sixth form. They take on much of the responsibility for their own learning and are very well placed to transfer to the world of work or higher education. Opportunities to take on responsibility are widespread and eagerly accepted, both within school and through the strong extra-curricular dimension of the school's curriculum. Flexible timetabling arrangements mean that virtually all students' preferred subject combinations are provided. The school's specialist areas – the arts and modern languages – contribute strongly to this flexibility, provide a wide range of courses and accreditations, and enable students to achieve high standards.

The excellent provision in the sixth form results from exceptional leadership and management. The confident, articulate and successful young people in the sixth form are testimony to the school's effectiveness in achieving '21st Century Scholarship and Care'.

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

- There are no issues for improvement that the school has not already identified in its current development plan.

**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](http://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	<b>School Overall</b>	<b>16-19</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	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

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	1	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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	

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<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.



## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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	
The extent to which 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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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	

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

24 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth School, Cumbria, LA6 2HJ

Thank you for the warm welcome and the help you gave us when we inspected your school recently. Please pass on our thanks to your parents and carers for the questionnaires they returned and tell them we took their views into account.

It was a pleasure to talk with so many of you about your learning and the support you are given to succeed. We agree with you that Queen Elizabeth's is an outstanding school. We were very impressed by your excellent behaviour and supportive relationships with each other. Here are some of the things that make your school stand out from others.

- You reach very high standards and achieve exceptionally well both in the main school and in the sixth form.
- You are very well taught and make very good progress in your learning. Your teachers have an excellent range of skills and strategies to make your learning exciting.
- The care, guidance and support you receive are excellent. They make you feel safe and secure in school so that you are happy and able to succeed. You always know where to turn for help and are confident that problems will be solved quickly by your teachers.
- You have excellent personal and social skills. You know how to lead healthy lives and have a good understanding of your responsibilities as part of a community. You are very well prepared for the future and are confident, caring young people.
- The curriculum and the extra-curricular activities are excellent. They meet your needs extremely well and motivate you to attend school very well. It was good to see how many exciting pathways are opened to you by the school.
- Your school's successful specialist status for the arts, modern foreign languages and as a training school provides enormous benefits in resources and leading edge developments which greatly enhance your education.
- Leadership and management of the school are first class. There is a very sharp understanding of what needs to improve and how to bring about change quickly and effectively. There is an excellent commitment to continually making the school better and to doing this in a democratic way so that everyone's views are taken into account.

You and your parents are justified in being so proud of your school and your achievements. We know that you will continue to make it better by supporting every aspect of its work just as you do now. Very best wishes to you all for a happy and successful year.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead Inspector