

# Queen Elizabeth's School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	113883
<b>Local Authority</b>	Dorset
<b>Inspection number</b>	325906
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 December 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Mary Massey HMI

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>	Comprehensive
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	13–18
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1416
Sixth form	336
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	John Andrews
<b>Headteacher</b>	Andy Puttock
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	19 September 2005
<b>School address</b>	Blandford Road Pamphill Wimborne BH21 4DT
<b>Telephone number</b>	01202 885233
<b>Fax number</b>	01202 840703

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## Introduction

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

## Description of the school

Queen Elizabeth's School is a large popular over-subscribed school, serving a large and mainly rural part of East Dorset. Many students travel long distances to school by bus. The school has longstanding historical links with the Anglican church of Wimborne Minster and retains a Christian ethos. The majority of students are of white British heritage and very few are at the early stages of learning English. Only a small proportion of students are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is below average. The majority of these students have specific learning or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

The school was designated a specialist sports college in September 2003 and redesignated in 2008.

The school is currently being rebuilt under the Building Schools for the Future scheme, with a projected opening date of November 2010, although some creative arts subjects will be able to occupy new accommodation earlier.

Partnership with Ferndown Upper School and Bournemouth and Poole College ensures a wide range of courses available for 14–19.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Queen Elizabeth's School provides a good education for its students. Students are positive, enjoy school and recognise what it does for them. Parents, too, are very supportive of the leadership and management of the school, and say they find the staff approachable and helpful. The extent to which students adopt healthy lifestyles is outstanding, largely as a result of the school's specialist sports status. Students enthusiastically involve themselves in the many physical activities available both within and outside school time.

Students make good progress and achieve examination results that are above the national average, with a rising trend over the last three years at GCSE. This is the result of good teaching, although variation exists across the school, with some outstanding as well as some satisfactory lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge and students respond enthusiastically, behave well and make good progress, especially where activities challenge and involve them. In many subjects, students work effectively in groups and as they move up the school, their skills as independent learners develop, particularly in project-based subjects such as creative arts and design technology. A good personalised curriculum meets the needs of students, and effective intervention supports those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are at risk of underachieving. However, in lessons, some teachers do not always pay enough attention to ensuring that the strategies and resources they use meet the individual needs of all students, including those with learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented.

The care provided for students is excellent, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported very well. Parents value the inclusive nature of the school and some commented on the fact that at a recent Year 9 concert, all students took part. Guidance for students at important transition times, such as when choosing GCSE courses or transferring into the sixth form, is very thorough and personalised. Many parents commented on the smooth transition from middle school. Students feel confident that there is always someone to talk to if they have either personal or academic difficulties, and that any bullying issues will be sorted out promptly. However, students are not consistently provided with regular written or oral feedback on their work so that they know exactly what they need to do in each subject in order to improve and progress from one level to the next.

The school is led well by the headteacher and the senior team, who provide a clear vision and focused direction and effectively promote community cohesion, especially through the shared facilities and coaching provided through the school's sports specialism. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well, because procedures for monitoring and evaluating the school's performance involve leaders at all levels and are thorough and systematic. However, some middle managers are not yet using the data generated to identify the most effective ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning. There is good practice in some departments and, where data is used well, there is a clear impact on students' achievement. The improvements over the last three years in students' achievement, particularly in the sixth form and in widening the curriculum across the whole age range, indicate that the school's capacity to improve is good.

## **Effectiveness of the sixth form**

### **Grade: 2**

The sixth form is fully inclusive and provides a wide range of courses that cater for students of all abilities. Since the last inspection, standards have improved considerably. Whilst standards are now broadly in line with the national average, the achievement of students is now good when measured against prior attainment because the quality of teaching has improved. Lessons are well prepared, and teachers successfully engage students in their learning and ensure that they work collaboratively and independently. Students appreciate the one-to-one support provided by teachers and the fact that they provide thorough and speedy feedback on their work. Advice on what to do to improve their work further is often given, although this is not always done consistently. The curriculum is enhanced by a good extra-curricular programme and by many opportunities for students to work independently and contribute to the whole school and wider community.

Students' behaviour both in lessons and around the school is exemplary. They are very pleasant and courteous and clearly enjoy attending their sixth form, fully participating in the many opportunities available to enhance their spiritual development and making a real contribution to the inclusive and warm atmosphere. Many mentor younger students and they have led the school council in developing a bus charter to improve behaviour on the school buses. Students' preparation for the world of work is unusually good. Recently, sixth form students, with students from the main school, have successfully handled the large budget associated with a major project to plan and implement changes which will make the school more environmentally friendly. A rich programme of activities helps to develop students' cultural understanding but there are insufficient opportunities for students to understand and celebrate British cultural diversity. They have a very strong understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They receive effective advice to support them in making decisions about their future lives.

Good leadership has contributed to the improvements made since the last inspection and to the rising trends in examination results. Leaders understand the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form, which has a good capacity for improvement.

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

- Encourage heads of faculty to share existing good practice about effective ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Ensure that students are consistently provided with regular subject-specific feedback so that they know exactly what they have to do in order to improve.
- Ensure that teaching strategies are matched effectively to the needs of individual students with learning or behavioural difficulties and those who are gifted and talented.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Results in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 have remained significantly above the national average over the last three years. This is also the case at Key Stage 4, especially in the proportion of students achieving five A\*-C grades including English and mathematics. When either a language or two sciences are included in this figure, the proportion of students is also well above the national average. This good attainment represents good progress from students' starting points. In 2008, some lower ability boys and middle ability girls in Year 11 did not make as much progress as their peers and this was often linked to their attendance. All

groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, are currently making good progress, and are set to maintain high standards in 2009.

In the sixth form, after a dip in the number of students attaining the higher grades in 2007, figures continued the rising trend of previous years, with students reaching their highest average point scores to date in 2008. BTEC courses have a high number of students attaining distinction and merit grades. These results, as well as current standards, show that students make good progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students show good moral, social and cultural development. The Christian ethos of the school is clear in their strong spiritual development. Positive attitudes are demonstrated in students' willingness to participate in a range of activities for charity and for the community, both globally and locally, and in an increasingly influential school council. Students feel safe and secure in school and are confident that where bullying occurs, it will be dealt with. Sports specialist status has resulted in students having an outstanding awareness of the need for a healthy lifestyle, which is shown by low obesity rates and very high participation in fitness activities. Personal, health and social education and citizenship lessons prepare students well for life in a multicultural society and students have developed a commitment to racial equality. An emphasis on business and enterprise education and the development of appropriate skills across the curriculum, particularly through sports specialist status, means that students are very well prepared for the world of work.

Some parents expressed concerns about poor behaviour on the school buses. Students, however, reported the positive impact of the recently implemented bus charter, which has been negotiated by the school council with the local bus companies.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Using tightly focused observations, the school has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and is using this knowledge to identify areas for improvement.

In lessons that are good or outstanding, students are well behaved and engaged; they understand the lesson objectives and have the opportunity for concentrated group work and independent learning. Where applicable, grade criteria are successfully used to inform students of the level of achievement they are reaching. High expectations and effective planning enable students to benefit from excellent pace, well-defined challenging tasks and scope to show what they have learned with confidence. In a mathematics lesson, for example, fast pace coupled with humour and practical examples enhanced the students' ability to cope with tasks successfully. In history, there was strong evidence that teachers challenged assumptions and took students to higher level of understanding and empathy. A PE lesson successfully illustrated how students of all abilities can identify their own progress, by involving students in identifying their own level of skill and using other students to assess and challenge performance.

Although the school is good at identifying the needs of different groups of learners and recommends strategies to enhance students' learning in the classroom, the implementation of these strategies by staff is variable. The provision of different work for students with different

needs is not always part of teachers' planning. In a minority of classes, recommended strategies to support those students who have behavioural difficulties are not implemented effectively. Teaching assistants and learning mentors work very effectively with students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, but teachers do not always take sufficient responsibility for monitoring these students' progress.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which places great emphasis on personalised learning and flexibility. The breadth of provision, including good vocational and work-related learning and enterprise opportunities in Years 10 and 11, is lifting achievement, ensuring the needs of most students are met and facilitating successful post-16 choices. At Key Stage 4, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at risk of disaffection are particularly well catered for through coherent alternative pathways which make a significant contribution to their personal development and future economic well-being. The school is systematically responding to the local 14-19 agenda, developing good links with partner schools and colleges and preparing to lead in diploma provision. At Key Stage 3, the school is in the process of launching an imaginative curriculum that is designed to meet the needs of all and reinforce continuity between key stages.

The range of activities provided through the PE and dance department ensures that nearly all students can find physical activities that appeal to them and so participation rates for extra-curricular sport and dance are very high. In addition, the school's specialist sports status is used very effectively to support the development of sports skills in local middle schools, many of whom have become partner schools in the specialism.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

The care and support that students receive in the school are very good. Procedures for safeguarding students and promoting their welfare are robust and child protection procedures are thorough. Students appreciate the fact that staff are always available to answer queries or help them with problems. Several students told inspectors about the positive help and support they had been given by staff at the Teenage Life Centre. This venture, run jointly with the Primary Care Trust on the school site, is highly successful in supporting students' health and well-being. Students in the care of the local authority and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported. Individual learning plans are well documented and students are aware of their targets and what they should do to improve. Although time is provided for tutors to talk to students individually about their progress, sometimes those who are doing well receive less attention than those who are underachieving.

Where marking is good, students are not only given feedback on the current piece of work but appropriate comments are also included to guide them on how to improve future work. However, in some subjects students are unaware of how they can improve their learning and progress, because the quality of marking and feedback is inconsistent.

Attendance has remained no better than average for the last two years, and regular absences are having an impact on some students' achievement. Stronger systems for improving attendance have been put in place recently, but they have not yet had time to make a difference. Some parents and students expressed concerns about poor behaviour, but inspectors found that

behaviour both in and out of lessons at Key Stages 3 and 4 was good, especially when the quality of teaching was good or better, and systems for managing it are effective.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher and his team use very challenging targets to promote improvement and these are not only applied at whole-school level, but also in departments and for individual teachers. The school's five-year development plan is ambitious and is supplemented by short-term one-year projects on targeted subjects, with very focused support and training provided. In 2008, this has had a very positive impact, for example on the proportion of students obtaining five A\* to C grades including English and mathematics at GCSE. The school uses the expertise of its own staff very effectively to provide training for the rest of the staff. However, the opportunity for middle managers to share their good practice both in leadership and in developing the teaching and learning skills of their teams is currently limited.

Senior leaders and the governors have worked very hard to maintain high morale and a strong focus on maintaining good provision and achievement for current students, throughout the inevitable distraction and difficulties associated with building the new school. However, the two-year delay to the original planned opening date of the new buildings means that much of the current accommodation is in a very poor state of repair. Although this has not had an impact on examination results, it does limit the opportunities for extending learning in some subjects, particularly the creative arts.

Parents are very supportive of the school, and many comment on the efficient way their concerns are dealt with. Although there have been difficulties in recruiting governors, the school now has a full complement, who are well trained and take their responsibilities very seriously. Regular presentations from heads of faculty ensure that they are well informed about achievement and progress in individual subjects, although they do not yet broaden their understanding of the school's performance through first-hand observations and visits.



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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 <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2	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/or disabilities make progress	2	

<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>	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2	2
The attendance of learners	3	2
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	1

## The quality of provision

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

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2	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	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**

5 December 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's School, Wimborne BH21 4DT

A team of inspectors visited your school recently. I would like to thank those of you who talked to us about the positive atmosphere and enjoyable activities you experience, but also made useful constructive criticism about those areas that could be improved.

We found that Queen Elizabeth's is a good school. Examination results have risen in recent years, both in the main school and the sixth form, which means that you are making good progress that is set to continue in 2009. This is because most teaching is good or better and the curriculum is well matched to your needs. You are well looked after, and many of you told us that the guidance you were given for the transfer into Year 9 from middle schools and into the sixth form was excellent. We were particularly impressed with the impact of sport specialist status on the amount of exercise you do and how healthy you are.

Your school is led and managed well. In spite of the distraction of the new school building project, the staff are working very hard to make sure that this does not affect what they are doing for you.

We identified some things that the school could do better, and we have asked the school leaders to focus on the following:

- Make sure that you are consistently provided with regular feedback – this could be through marking or verbally – so that you know exactly what you have to do in order to improve in each subject.
- Make sure that teaching strategies are matched to your individual needs, especially for those of you with learning or behaviour difficulties and those who are gifted and talented.
- Encourage heads of faculty to share what they do well so that they can improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to raise your achievement even further.

You can help by making sure your attendance is as good as possible. The more you are in school, the more progress you will make. I do hope some of you will read the full report on [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

Wishing all of you the very best for the future

Mary Massey Her Majesty's Inspector