

# The Queen Elizabeth's High School, Gainsborough

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	120655
Local Authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	327334
Inspection dates	19–20 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Martin Cragg HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1192
Sixth form	291
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs B Adlington
Headteacher	Mr D J Smart
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 February 2006
School address	Morton Terrace Gainsborough Lincolnshire DN21 2ST
Telephone number	01427 612354
Fax number	01427 612856
Email address	office@qehs.lincs.sch.uk

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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons, and held meetings with the chair of governors, groups of students and a range of staff. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school development plan, specialist status bid, governors' minutes and case studies of support for vulnerable students. Inspectors considered the outcomes of 544 parental, 52 staff and 472 student questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by students at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, including that of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and other particular needs
- teachers' planning of lessons and the variety of approaches to learning used, including the use of computer technology
- teachers' marking and feedback to students to help them know what to improve and how to do so
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation in identifying the action to be taken to bring about improvement in weaker aspects of subjects or teaching.

## Information about the school

The school achieved dual specialist status in music and languages in September 2008. Since the last inspection a new headteacher and deputy headteacher have been appointed and the responsibilities of the senior team have been revised. The school has Healthy School Status and participates in the Gainsborough cluster for the development of 14 to 19 education.

## Further information about the school

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	1192	Above average
Free school meals	1.5%	Well below average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	6.0%	Well below average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	7.4%	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	2.0%	Below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	0.5%	Well below average

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

1

## Main findings

This is an outstanding school with many strengths. Students' attainment is high and improving. The sixth form is outstanding. The school is inclusive and students with specific needs achieve very well. Students' personal development is outstanding; their attitudes, engagement and behaviour are exemplary. Teaching and learning are good overall and some is outstanding. However, not all teachers plan lessons to cater for different abilities and marking is inconsistent in quality. Monitoring and evaluation is thorough but the best practice in the school is not yet routinely shared with all staff. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses and has outstanding capacity to improve further.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching further, so that more is outstanding, by ensuring that all teachers:
  - plan lessons to make sure that objectives and tasks challenge students with differing needs and attainment
  - use a fuller range of approaches to learning which motivate and enthuse students
  - use marking and feedback to make explicit to students what they must do to improve their work and how they may do so.
- Use the information gained through monitoring and evaluation to share the best practice in teaching, learning and assessment with all teachers.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

1

Students' achievement is outstanding. Attainment is high at all key stages and the proportion of higher grades increased at both GCSE and A level in 2008. Students' progress is good overall and outstanding in the sixth form. Gifted and talented students achieve well, with many successfully achieving qualifications earlier than their peers. Those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make outstanding progress. Students who speak English as an additional language also

make very good progress. Overall, students are well-motivated and concentrate very well. They collaborate effectively but also work well independently, especially in the sixth form.

Students' personal development is excellent. They show well-developed social skills and treat each other with respect. Behaviour around the school and in lessons is exemplary. Students have a very good awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and their participation in sport and activities is high. Cultural differences are celebrated and students recognise the importance of understanding how others live and their beliefs. Students value the support provided by the school at each stage of their learning, especially in preparing for higher education. Their high achievement, good quality work experience and enterprise activities prepare them very well for their future economic well-being.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	1
Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	1
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	1
How well do pupils behave?	1
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	1
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	1

## The quality of the school's work

Teaching is good overall and some is outstanding. In the best lessons, all students are challenged, enthused by interesting approaches including the use of computer technology, and learn quickly. Teachers encourage discussion and provide a wide range of activities for students to apply their skills and understanding. However, in some lessons, teachers spend too long talking and work is not matched carefully enough to students' needs and attainment. The marking of students' work varies too much in quality between subjects. Nevertheless, formal assessment procedures are excellent. Teachers know students' levels of attainment and track carefully the progress they make over time.

The curriculum is excellent and helps students reach very high standards in most subjects. Students benefit from the breadth and depth of study they undertake. The

<sup>1</sup> Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

school has successfully launched its specialist status and plans to broaden the curriculum through the 14 to 19 diploma courses. Every child does matter at this school. The emphasis on treating each student as an individual ensures that all are very well supported through academic and pastoral monitoring. Vulnerable students are very well supported through excellent liaison with parents and appropriate agencies. There are robust and thorough systems for ensuring that students are safe.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	1
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	1
Support, guidance and care	1

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders, governors and staff have maintained and improved students' high achievement while introducing significant change in the last two years. There are effective systems for monitoring and evaluation which enable senior leaders and governors to know the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's planning is tightly focused on key priorities. However, the excellent practice in some areas of the school is not yet routinely shared so that all staff may learn and improve.

Expectations are very high and challenging targets are set, even when outcomes are already impressive. Governors carry out their statutory duties thoroughly and review the school's performance closely, taking important decisions to support improvement. Resources are efficiently deployed and value for money is outstanding.

The school makes excellent provision for community cohesion and has made rapid progress in this area. Partnerships with other schools and organisations are good and developing further through the school's specialist status. Links with primary schools, such as the Pyramid Project, provide support for younger pupils who need extra help. Students take on a very wide range of responsibilities which contribute very effectively to the school and local communities. The school provides excellent equal opportunities for all its students to flourish and enjoy their education. The school shares its aspirations widely and its aims are supported by parents and students.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	1
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	1
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	1
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	1

Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision-making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	2
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	1
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	1

## Sixth form

The sixth form is a strength of the school. Students' attainment is high and 70% of grades at A level in 2008 were either A or B. Students make outstanding progress. Teaching and learning are outstanding in many subjects. Students are encouraged to learn independently and to develop skills which prepare them well for further study. Their progress is carefully tracked and reviewed to provide very effective support when required. Sixth formers make exceptional contributions to the school and local community through a range of responsibilities and projects. They choose from a good range of courses and the school has participated actively in local planning to increase the range of vocational and applied options in the near future. The leadership and management of the sixth form sets a clear vision for its development and key staff have a very precise understanding of its strengths and potential areas for development.

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form	1
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

## Views of parents, carers, students and staff

The great majority of the 544 parents who responded to the questionnaire are very happy with the school and what it does for their children. Very many commented on their children's enjoyment of school, how safe they feel and how well they are prepared for the next stages in their education and later lives. Many parents commented positively on the wide range of extra-curricular activities. A small proportion of parents thought that the school does not support students' understanding of a healthy lifestyle well enough. The finding of the inspection team is that students are well prepared in this area.

Over 90% of the 472 students who returned questionnaires enjoy school and feel safe most of the time. A large majority endorsed the other areas of the school's work including behaviour and guidance on the next stage of their education or employment. Of the 52 staff who responded to the questionnaire, almost all are proud to work at the school, understand its aims and feel that it runs smoothly. The majority endorsed the other areas of the school's work.



## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

**Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.

**Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

**Achievement:** an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.

**Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.

**Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.

21 November 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of the Queen Elizabeth's High School,  
Gainsborough, DN21 2ST



Thank you on behalf of the inspection team for the courteous and friendly welcome we received when we visited your school. We enjoyed our discussions with those of you to whom we spoke and found your responses informative and very supportive of the school. Thank you also to the 472 of you who returned questionnaires. This letter is to tell you about the outcomes of the inspection.

Your school is providing outstanding education. Attainment is high at all stages but especially in the sixth form, which is a real strength of the school. From the lessons we saw and our conversations with you, we were very impressed by your maturity, motivation to do well and hard work. We believe that the school also works hard to ensure that everyone is successful, including those who may find learning more difficult. We saw some outstanding teaching and much that was good. You benefit from a wide range of subjects and an excellent programme of activities, clubs and events. We were impressed by students' contribution to the school and in the community. We also recognise the growing influence of the school council. The 472 questionnaires showed that almost all of you enjoy school, feel safe and appreciate that staff help you to learn, although just under half of you say that the school helps you to be healthy sometimes. Inspectors found arrangements for healthy eating and sports activities to be very good. The school is well led and is taking on a range of changes designed to improve it further. The staff and governors set very challenging targets, even where performance is already very high.

However, for the school to improve further, we asked for an increase in the amount of outstanding teaching by ensuring that all teachers:

- plan their lessons to match work to the different needs and abilities of students in the class
- use a wider range of approaches to learning to gain your interest and enthusiasm
- mark your work so that you know exactly what you need to do to improve.

We also asked the staff to share the very best practice in teaching and assessment across the school.

We are confident that your school will continue to improve and wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Cragg  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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