

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118921
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339323
Inspection dates	29–30 April 2010
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Grammar (selective)
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	869
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	230
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Peter Lee
Headteacher	David Anderson
Date of previous school inspection	14 May 2007
School address	Abbey Place Faversham ME13 7BQ
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 36 lessons involving 36 teachers, and held meetings with the chair of governors and representative governors, staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's planning documents, assessment information and students' work. In addition, 282 parent and 51 staff questionnaires were received and analysed, along with 187 from pupils.

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

- whether or not girls make as much progress as boys
- how well students do in the sixth form and the quality of provision for them
- the impact of the focus on improving teaching and the extent to which it now meets the needs of students' different abilities, gifts and talents
- the contribution of the school's specialisms to school improvement.

Information about the school

Most students in this average-sized school are from White British backgrounds, with small numbers from a range of ethnic minority backgrounds. Around half the students live in Faversham, with others travelling from nearby towns and villages. Eligibility for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is low and are mainly related to emotional or physical needs. The school achieved mathematics and computing specialist status in 2004 and, as an identified high performing school, was awarded a second specialism in languages in 2008. The headteacher joined the school since the last inspection.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School is a good school and has won many accolades, including that of being a high performing specialist school. Under the strong leadership of the headteacher, ably supported by the leadership team, it now has more outstanding aspects to its work than when it was last inspected. In particular, students' already high academic performance has improved steadily, with more students achieving the highest GCSE and A-level grades because of the increasingly rapid progress they make.

Students' other outcomes are also mostly outstanding, preparing them exceptionally well for their future education and careers. Their behaviour is exemplary and makes an important contribution to the excellent atmosphere for learning in lessons. One student summed up the school accurately in the reflection, 'Healthy competition challenges you to do things you may not even have thought of.' This also demonstrates students' appreciation of the outstanding care and guidance they receive.

The school's specialist status makes a significant contribution to school improvement, shown in students' particularly high attainment and strong progress in mathematics. Other very strong subjects are geography, history, design and technology and religious studies. The school is now using the resources of its new language specialism to strengthen performance further in this area. Older students in particular commented positively on the improvements made in the school during their time in it. The school council has recently reviewed the way in which year councils gain and represent the views of other students. Their views are acted upon well, for example in changing the use of staircases around the school. The council's work complements the views sought through formal questionnaires, but there is still room for staff to take more account of students' views of how they learn and the aspects of the curriculum which most closely match their needs.

The school's honest self-evaluation is used effectively to identify next steps, placing it well to continue to improve. A full review of the school's practices has helped the headteacher to establish an exceptionally clear view of future direction and where improvements can be made, and this is shared well by staff and governors. School morale is high, shown in staff dedication and determination to improving provision further so that students have an even better school experience. For example, important changes have been made to the curriculum and further improvements are planned. Most notably, these are intended to extend an enrichment programme to broaden students' awareness of issues beyond their academic study and to give them additional first-hand experiences through more visits related to their studies. A focus on developing teaching and learning has opened the debate about the most effective practice and is successfully bringing about greater consistency across the school.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen the impact of the student voice by seeking their views more on
 - which teaching approaches help them to learn most effectively
 - how the curriculum is developed to match their needs and interests.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Students are highly motivated to achieve both academically and personally. Their focus and concentration makes a strong contribution to their high and improving attainment. Their learning is typically good, and in some cases outstanding, and the school is continuing to develop its practice with a clear aim to make outstanding learning the norm. Students work well together in pairs or small groups, talking about their learning and helping one another by articulating their thinking. The very strong relationships they have, between themselves and with their teachers, mean that issues can be explored within a supportive environment where individual views are valued and respected. As one student reflected, 'The teachers work with us to get us to where we want to be.' Students persevere well even when learning is very challenging or when teaching does not capture their interest sufficiently. Although their overall attainment is marginally higher, in some years girls have not made quite as much progress as boys in external examinations. This slight difference can be attributed to the success of a focus on improving boys' attainment. However, observation of lessons shows that girls are as fully involved in their learning and make as much progress as boys. The school takes prompt action in ensuring that students achieve well in all subjects, for example by the changes made when there was a slight dip in GCSE English results last year.

Students' responses to the questionnaire and discussions with them indicate that they feel extremely safe and know how to look after themselves. They appreciate all that the school does to promote healthy lifestyles and have good knowledge of how to keep fit and healthy, saying 'We like the loyalty cards and prizes for healthy eating' and 'There's always something sporting going on.' Students are reflective of the opportunities offered to them by the school and enjoy the responsibilities they take on. They value that such opportunities are gradually being increased, for example the introduction of Year 10 mentors for younger students. Activities such as running the fair trade tuck shop and initiating many charity events are examples of students' strong social awareness and their responsible attitudes and desire to contribute to society.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Pupils appreciate the welcoming learning environment and the success of transition arrangements, whether when joining the school in Year 7 or moving into the sixth form. Careful attention is paid to ensuring that each student is treated as an individual and given the support appropriate to them. As one student commented, 'Our form tutors are like our parents in school.' Students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make exceptionally rapid progress because of the carefully focused support for their academic and emotional development.

A focus on improving the quality of teaching has been successful in reducing inconsistency, and the school's data show that students are making increasingly rapid progress. Students say that learning is particularly effective when they are given practical activities and feel that they would benefit from more practically based teaching. Teachers use their subject expertise very well to prepare lessons which are well structured and paced. Generally good use is made of new technologies to add interest and illustrate learning points. Typically lessons are good rather than outstanding because, although activities are planned to match the needs and abilities of all students, sometimes activities could take learning forward at an even faster pace. In a few lessons, teachers do not make the best use of the additional support provided by teaching assistants. Students respond well to the challenging targets set for them and the additional and prompt support they are given if they show any signs of falling behind what is expected of them.

The curriculum has developed well since the last inspection. It has an appropriate emphasis on academic pathways, with elements of innovative design such as the

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compression of Key Stage 3 to give students wider choice of GCSE courses over time. The academic curriculum is balanced with a wide range of enrichment events, often arising from the specialist provision, for example access to examinations in three European languages in addition to additional classes in Russian and Chinese. Plans are in place to improve tutorial time and give students more physical activities to further support their access to a healthy lifestyle.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior and middle leaders have an exceptionally strong awareness of the improvements they wish to make and have the skills and experience to achieve their plans. Governors have improved the way they work since the last inspection and are very well informed about strategic leadership. They use this well to evaluate and challenge the work of the school. Much critical work has been undertaken in ensuring consistently effective learning and also in evaluating the impact of school policy since the headteacher took up his post. There is a clear schedule to ensure that detailed evaluation continues to areas not yet covered in full, such as evaluating the impact of the school's promotion of community cohesion and equal opportunities. The school is a strongly cohesive society. Students speak highly of the opportunities they are given and are clear that discrimination is not tolerated. The school has good links with other local schools, often through its specialist status, and is planning to build on opportunities currently available in the sixth form for more students to participate in community activities beyond the school. Students develop their understanding of international issues well through a range of trips as far afield as China and the USA. Such links are constantly being extended as recognised in International School awards, although links with other areas in Britain are less well developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1

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The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Sixth form

Students make good progress during their time in the sixth form, so that pass rates at AS and A-level are above average, giving them the qualifications they need for education or training after school. Most progress to their chosen universities. Teaching is good, contributing well to students' good learning and building on trusting and positive relationships. At best, students are given high quality opportunities to develop independent lifelong learning skills. Students comment very positively that care, guidance and support are of the highest quality. They comment particularly how this has significantly improved over the past 18 months. Target grades are used effectively to monitor students' progress and they appreciate the time given by staff to support their studies. The sixth form is well led. Students choose from a wide range of courses, their academic options being enhanced by effective links with a local school offering vocational provision. Students participate enthusiastically within the school, being proactive within the school council, debating society and enterprise activities. Students enjoy taking on responsibilities and supporting younger pupils, knowing that they are also developing their own leadership skills.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth form	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	2
The quality of provision in the sixth form	2
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the school, matching the findings of the inspection. Many commented on the quality of relationships and care in comments such as, 'The pastoral care at QEGS has remained solid and proactive and

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values traditional standards including respect, manners, individuality and diversity.? A few parents expressed concerns about how the school takes account of their concerns and helps them to support their child?s learning. This issue had not been raised in a recent survey carried out by the school. By contrast, a broadly similar number of parents and carers commented positively on how the school proactively resolves problems and on the effectiveness of the texting and parent mail service in providing them with up-to-date information. The school takes parents? views seriously, seen in its positive response to promoting healthy lifestyles and providing a wider range of extra-curricular activities and trips, raised in an earlier survey.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 282 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 869 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	121	43	150	53	8	3	1	0
The school keeps my child safe	120	43	157	56	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	140	50	129	46	11	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	152	54	119	42	6	2	1	0
The teaching is good at this school	114	40	158	56	7	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	67	24	156	55	40	14	3	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	59	21	184	65	25	9	3	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	96	34	143	51	17	6	1	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	110	39	152	54	12	4	1	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	81	29	166	59	17	6	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	59	21	157	56	32	11	3	1
The school is led and managed effectively	109	39	156	55	4	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	150	53	125	44	4	1	1	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



5 May 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Faversham ME13 7BQ

Thank you for your help and for giving up some of your own time to talk to us during the inspection. I am writing to let you know about our findings.

Queen Elizabeth's is a good school and you are right to be proud of it. Here are just some of the reasons:

- the strong school ethos, making the school a very tolerant and cohesive society
- good teaching and the very positive climate for learning in lessons, so that you support one another extremely well and enjoy learning together
- your high aspirations and the good progress you make during your time in school, which is leading to year-on-year improvements in external examination results and giving you excellent opportunities for study when you leave school
- your excellent attendance and behaviour
- the way you get involved in a wide range of opportunities, such as running the tuck shop and setting up fundraising activities for charity
- your understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles
- the way in which the specialist subjects are enriching your experiences
- the strong leadership of the headteacher and staff and the changes which have been made recently.

The headteacher, staff and governors are very ambitious for ongoing improvement and we know that you will do your best to support the school's drive. We have asked staff to strengthen the student voice about how improvement can be achieved. In particular, we have asked them to seek your views more often about the curriculum and how you learn best so that teachers can use the information to influence their approaches to teaching.

Best wishes for your future success from the inspection team.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings

Lead inspector

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