

# Queens' School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	136877
<b>Local authority</b>	N/A
<b>Inspection number</b>	384803
<b>Inspection dates</b>	26–27 April 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Ian Middleton 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>	Academy
<b>School category</b>	Non-maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–19
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	1656
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Jim Sowerbutts
<b>Headteacher</b>	Terry James
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	27 September 2006
<b>School address</b>	Aldenham Road Bushey WD23 2TY
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<b>Fax number</b>	01923 223975
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## Introduction

### Inspection team

Ian Middleton	Her Majesty's Inspector
James McAtear	Additional inspector
Najoud Ensaff	Additional inspector
Hermione Horn	Additional inspector
Clive Robson	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The number of lessons observed, and the number of teachers seen, was 51. Meetings were held with students, the Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, subject and pastoral leaders. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work and looked at the plans for improvement, assessment information, lesson plans, the school's monitoring information, school policies and 151 questionnaires from parents and carers.

## Information about the school

Queens' School is a larger than average-sized secondary school which became an academy in July 2011. Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above average. Those whose first language is not English is below average. A few students are of Traveller heritage. The proportions of students with disabilities and those with special educational needs, and the proportion with a statement of special educational needs, are well below average. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is very small in relation to schools nationally.

The predecessor school met the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for the standards students reach by the end of Year 11. The school was awarded specialist status in sports and science. A sports academy for gifted and talented students in the sixth form is established. The school's awards include Sportsmark, Artsmark, Healthy Schools and International School.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. From above average starting points, students make better progress than their peers nationally, to attain standards that are significantly above average. However, overall effectiveness is not outstanding because the quality of teaching and learning are not consistently high enough to ensure that students make equally rapid progress in all subjects and years.
- The students' behaviour and safety are good. Attendance is above average. Students show very positive attitudes to learning and collaborate very well. Their contribution to the school and community is strong due to wide ranging responsibilities that are taken seriously. Provision for students to develop and apply their leadership skills in lessons is an area of inconsistency.
- Teaching is good. The best lessons stimulate students' interest quickly and sustain it through skilled questioning and engaging activities. Teachers' knowledge of their subject and their students is good. However, not all teachers use well information about students' attainment to set and explain targets, or to tailor tasks or teaching styles to students' specific needs.
- The sixth form is good. Students make a significant contribution to school life. The prior attainment of sixth form students is above average. However, not all start the sixth form having developed high levels of initiative and independence, which contributes to slower progress in Year 12. A high proportion continue onto A-level courses, attain A\* to B grades and progress onto higher education.
- Leadership and management are good. The innovative features of the school reflect well the determination of senior leaders to make the school stand out. Students' rising performance is promoted by effective monitoring and intervention which show the academy's good capacity to improve further. However, evaluations of teaching are not always sufficiently focused on, or critical of, the quality of learning to promote consistently high levels of enjoyment and achievement. This is also a less effective aspect of the otherwise good governing body.

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

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- Raise achievement, eliminating variations within and between subjects and year groups, by:
  - evaluating the quality and impact of teaching more rigorously in order to focus professional development and performance management
  - developing the role of the governing body in relation to challenging the quality of learning in all years
  - ensuring that assessment information is used more diagnostically in order to meet students' individual needs
  - providing more coherent, regular and precise feedback on students' work in order to promote independence and to inform parents and carers
  - increasing opportunities for students to demonstrate their initiative and apply their leadership skills in lessons and across the curriculum.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Students make good progress in the large majority of lessons; this includes disabled students and those with special educational needs. Most parents and carers who expressed a view agree with this. Students' progress is rapid when teachers use assessment information to engage students quickly and actively in activities tailored to their needs. It is sustained when students are given regular opportunities to respond to precise feedback about how to improve their work, information they use well. Good examples of this were observed in a variety of lessons, although these are inconsistent features of learning within and between subjects and years. While students attain high standards overall, their rates of progress are variable. In the main school and sixth form, variations are particularly wide in science and languages, and between the early and later stages of courses, when students' progress accelerates as examinations approach.

Attainment on entry and by the end of Year 11 is consistently above average. The proportion of students attaining five higher-grade GCSEs including English and mathematics is consistently and significantly above average. However, the gap with schools nationally narrowed in 2011, particularly in relation to students' performance in science and languages and that of boys, inconsistencies the school has identified. The school's monitoring data indicates that actions taken are proving effective, although it is too early to evaluate the lasting impact on attainment.

Students start the sixth form with higher prior attainment than average for sixth formers nationally. While performance in vocational and applied GCSE courses is particularly variable, the proportion of students attaining higher-grades is consistently above average, although more so at A-level. Outstanding achievement at all levels in English literature, history, religious education and art and design show what is possible.

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## Quality of teaching

Teaching is good and a few lessons were judged outstanding; a very large majority of parents and carers and students agree with this. The teaching observed that promoted good or better progress was characterised by:

- high expectations of students made explicit by sharing examples of strong work achieved by other students, or emerging during the lesson
- confident use of subject knowledge to challenge students through questions, probe their answers and stimulate questioning and debate between students
- a range of stimuli, used selectively to engage students, for example, the use of film or text thoughtfully chosen with students' interests in mind
- thoughtful grouping of students to promote peer support and evaluation, supported by judicious intervention by the teacher or support staff.

The involvement of selected students in leading the learning of the class, although not used enough, was a teaching strategy in several subjects that brought out the very best in students and staff. For example, this was observed in an ICT lesson where students demonstrated their skills by preparing presentations and in PE and drama lessons where students modelled their techniques for others to evaluate. The result was that students reflected deeply, and, prompted by their teacher, took responsibility for the refinement of their own work in order to reach higher standards still. In other classes, there were missed opportunities for students to plan and carry out investigations.

A minority of lessons observed were no better than satisfactory. The proportion was higher than the school's evaluation. The weaker areas included insufficiently regular marking, or clarity about what students needed to do to improve their work in lessons or through independent activities; similar work given to students with different prior attainment, or insufficient exploration of individual students' depth of understanding or analysis. While all groups make good progress, common barriers to learning are not always identified or addressed easily or quickly. For example, there is incoherence in the approaches to assessment used across subjects. Several students had received feedback about the need to improve their revision techniques although strategies to address this had not been coordinated between subjects. However, there are examples of concerted efforts to support students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, for example in developing literacy across the curriculum. The use of phonics (the understanding of the sounds of letters to aid reading and spelling) is nevertheless at an early stage. There is good promotion of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, a feature of students' growth about which several parents commented very positively.

## Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students' behaviour is good. Attendance is consistently above average. Inspectors found students' attitudes to learning extremely positive, with rare exceptions. However, a small but significant proportion of students, parents and carers, raised concerns about behaviour in a minority of lessons. While there is some evidence that

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behaviour has contributed to pockets of lower achievement in the past, recent records and observations indicate that behaviour management is now consistent and effective. During unstructured times, students behave courteously to each other and to adults, moving purposefully between lessons spread across the two school sites in order to arrive punctually and be ready to learn. The high levels of students' participation in optional activities also show students taking increasing responsibility for the development of a healthy and cultured lifestyle. Weekly debates are a popular item; during the inspection students debated the value of Ofsted inspections.

Students value opportunities to extend their responsibilities to others in the school and community. Peer mentors, student governors, sports, drama and music leaders, school ambassadors and representatives of the school council, are just some of the roles and responsibilities students discussed enthusiastically with inspectors. Students articulated clearly the impact of their leadership roles on the development of their personal confidence and maturity, and compassion and respect for others. This contributes to students' strong sense of safety in school, a view endorsed by parents and carers. In all years, students considered the school's wide ranging anti-bullying and anti-racist initiatives to be effective and the systems for dealing with any occurrences clear. Inspectors evaluated students' understanding of different types of bullying as comprehensive.

## **Leadership and management**

The senior leadership team is strongly committed to students' academic and personal development. Standards in GCSE and A-level examinations have continued to rise since the last inspection, although schools with lower attainment narrowed the gap with the school between 2009 and 2011. Improved data management is helping to identify and challenge any variability within subjects and between groups. However, the use of data and other assessment information in the classroom is at an early stage. This highlights the variable quality and impact of evaluating teaching and learning, a weaker aspect of leadership and management. Records of lesson observations indicate that feedback to teachers is not always sufficiently challenging, or sharply focused on learning. While the governing body is very supportive of the school and well informed about most aspects, there is a need to challenge the quality of learning in all years, in addition to the current focus on outcomes in Years 11 and 13.

Provision for students' growth as active and responsible citizens is a strength of the school. The curriculum contributes well; students are well served by the range of courses and breadth of extra-curricular opportunities. The sports specialism of the school continues to draw the school and community together, and to drive curriculum innovation, for example the sixth form sports academy. Other innovative projects, for example the 'outdoor classroom' and 'business academy', integrate academic, vocational, social and emotional learning very well. These initiatives also reflect the entrepreneurialism of the headteacher in shaping visionary plans and turning them into a reality through effective partnership working. Whole school planning is strategic and its implementation is supported by many effective middle

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leaders who contribute to the school's good capacity for further improvement.

The school's leaders take steps to eliminate any discrimination through ensuring equality of access and opportunity. Examples include current actions to close gaps in performance between different groups, and increased vocational provision, an improvement since the last inspection. The arrangements for the safeguarding of students comply with regulations.

## Glossary

### 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.
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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



30 April 2012

Dear Students

### **Inspection of Queens' School, Bushey, WD23 2TY**

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school on 26 and 27 April, I would like to thank you for the welcome you gave us. We valued the opportunity to share your achievements and talk to you in discussion groups and lessons. This letter is to share our conclusions following the inspection.

Your school is good. We particularly liked these features.

- Your contribution to the school and the community, particularly through your collaborative work and leadership roles, is a strength of the school.
- You show positive attitudes to learning and your attendance is above average.
- Your standards reached in the main school and sixth form are above average.
- You make good progress in most years and across most of your subjects.
- Your lessons are generally good, particularly those that stimulate your enjoyment in learning and promote your independence.
- You behave responsibly, contributing to students feeling safe and supported.

We have asked the school to make further improvements by:

- working together to spot, share and develop more of the best teaching
- ensuring that you receive clear and regular feedback about your work
- increasing opportunities for you to use your leadership skills in lessons
- closing any gaps where your achievements are lower in particular years, subjects, or lower than those of other students.

You can help by responding quickly to the advice you are given about how to reach higher standards still, and by taking opportunities to contribute to lessons.

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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