

Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School

The Green Road, Ashbourne, DE6 1EP

Inspection dates

5–6 November 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher, very well supported by senior leaders and governors, has been relentless in her drive to improve all aspects of the school's work.
- Leaders have established rigorous processes for promoting high-quality teaching. Subject leaders take a leading role and hold teachers closely to account for the progress their students make. As a result, teaching across the school is now good and improving strongly.
- The curriculum students follow is very well matched to their particular needs and interests, providing a wealth of enrichment activities that promote students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students achieve well and all groups of students, including disabled students and those with special educational needs, the disadvantaged and the most able, make good progress.
- Literacy and numeracy are promoted well across different subjects, with a strong focus on the use of appropriate technical language.
- The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and ensure that their students understand how they will be assessed, and that they have a clear understanding of their challenging targets and how to achieve them.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is excellent; they show enthusiasm for their learning and are keen to do well. They listen attentively to their teachers and to each other.
- Behaviour around the large school site is exemplary even when unsupervised. Students are polite, courteous and helpful.
- The school takes great care of its students so that they feel very safe and have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Students say that bullying is rare and that derogatory language is not tolerated.
- The sixth form is good. Students achieve well and are very well prepared for their future careers. They take an active role within the school and the wider community, including supporting younger students.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teaching is yet good or outstanding. A very small minority of teachers do not consistently plan tasks that appropriately stretch and challenge all groups of students.
- Not all teachers check that pupils follow the advice they are given on how to improve their work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students' learning across all year groups and most subjects, including seven lessons which were seen together with one of the school's senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body and staff.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at: policies, the school's own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for development, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about students' progress, safeguarding documents and samples of students' work.
- The school's own survey of the views of parents and carers were taken into account in addition to the 99 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also received written correspondence and telephone calls from parents. Inspectors took into account the 49 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Justin Smith	Additional Inspector
Janet Bird	Additional Inspector
Richard White	Additional Inspector
Jeremy Seymour	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is above the average size of secondary schools nationally.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is low and almost none speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is average. Just over 2% of the school population are supported by an Education Health and Care Plan. The proportion of students with additional educational needs, including dyslexia, medical and other needs is approximately 10% of the school population.
- The school has specially resourced provision for disabled students and those with special educational needs from Year 7 to 11, supporting ten students with an Education Health and Care Plan, all of whom are fully integrated into mainstream classes.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is below average at 16%.
- Three students follow part-time off-site alternative courses or extended work placement provided by Derby College, Broomfield Hall College and Encore Recycling.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher provides support for two other Derbyshire headteachers.
- Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to staffing, including leadership.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching is consistently at least good by ensuring that all teachers, including in the sixth form, set tasks that provide appropriate stretch and challenge for students of all abilities to ensure they reach their full potential.
- Ensuring that all teachers consistently check that students respond to the advice they are given on how to improve their work.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The headteacher has been rigorous in addressing the areas of weakness she recognised on her appointment, and which were endorsed by the previous inspection. She has surrounded herself with a very strong and effective senior team and is very well supported by the governing body. She has been quick to establish her high expectations of students and staff and to create an environment in which all feel valued.
- Procedures for driving high-quality teaching are exceptionally strong and have led to rapid improvements. Teachers are closely held to account for students' progress and leaders check rigorously and frequently that teachers are ensuring this through their teaching and through their assessment of students' work. Where underperformance is identified, a comprehensive support system, including coaching, mentoring and additional training, ensures that teaching improves rapidly.
- Subject leaders are also closely held to account for the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility and drive improvement very effectively. They are well supported by senior leaders. Together they have established a supportive climate where teachers are encouraged to seek to improve their own practice. Many are keen to take part in and lead training; for example, the teaching and learning lunch sessions. Teachers give each other strong support.
- The newly established behaviour and pastoral support team provide outstanding support for students and they work relentlessly to ensure their safety. Their work, and that of the special educational needs coordinator has been recognised and praised by external organisations for the high quality of care they provide and for the clear procedures for safeguarding students that are in place. As a result, behaviour and safety are outstanding and safeguarding procedures very secure. The school site is kept safe and secure through, for example, keypad entry for each external door. The well-being of students on alternative provision is carefully monitored.
- The tracking of students' progress is extremely thorough, leading to the rigorous analysis of the performance of different groups of students. Any underachievement is quickly and effectively addressed. Leaders ensure that there is equal opportunity for all and that there is no discrimination. As a result, the gaps that existed between the performance of boys and girls are now closing, as is the gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. Additional funding is being used appropriately and is now having a strong impact on raising the attainment of disadvantaged students.
- New assessment methods are clear and effective; QEGS (Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School) 'points' are awarded for students according to their rates of progress. Students carry a target card showing their challenging targets for all subjects and a 'conversion wheel' that shows both students and their parents how these points equate to the old system of levels and grades. The most-able students are set exceptionally challenging targets, which are resulting in this group making fast progress.
- The curriculum that students follow is very well matched to students' interests and abilities. A full range of academic courses is balanced by the provision of opportunities for work-based learning, including in engineering, construction and agriculture. Literacy and numeracy are very well promoted across different subjects. Independent careers advice is a strength of the provision and is offered to all students, who are well supported in their option choices and in their transition from one key stage to another. There are no students not in education, employment or training (NEETS).
- Enrichments sessions, currently provided for Year 10 and 12 students, include a wide range of opportunities to either study an additional academic subject or to develop skills through such activities as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, community work or to learn life-skills such as cookery or carpentry. In addition, a wide variety of extra-curricular activities are offered, including in sport and the arts.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well promoted, including through the 'wellbeing' curriculum, delivered by well-trained staff and external speakers. Leaders ensure that students have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe, including from extremism and other dangers

that may face them, and that they are able to develop the leadership and other personal skills that prepare them very well for their role as citizens of modern Britain.

- The leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. Students are very well supported and guided, the quality of teaching and students' progress are rigorously monitored, and mentoring and individual support is provided to address any underachievement. Strong partnerships have been established with local businesses and with a range of universities so that students and their parents are able to make well-informed choices about their future.
- The school constantly seeks to engage parents in their child's education. The online homework has been particularly popular with parents because they are able now to check what work has been set and if it has been completed. Regular reporting of progress is well established. A parent liaison officer has been appointed to target harder-to-reach parents and to provide support for those facing challenging circumstances.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a very clear vision for the school, using their wide range of expertise and experience to give a strong lead to its direction, particularly in their planning for the future as the school expands further. They are well informed about data relating to the school's performance and how it compares to schools nationally. They also draw on other clear information that is provided about all aspects of the school's work. This enables them to provide a balance of challenge and support for senior leaders.
 - Governors are fully involved in the life of the school. They make regular visits, including joining in the scrutiny of students' work and visiting lessons. They regularly seek and act upon students' views; for example, recently talking to groups of students in Years 7 and 12 to consult them on their opinion of transition between key stages.
 - Governors ensure that performance management procedures are effective and that teachers' salary progression is linked to the achievement of their students. They monitor carefully the impact of additional funding on the progress and well-being of disadvantaged students.
 - Governors ensure that they access training and are constantly seeking to improve their practice. They focus strongly on ensuring that safeguarding procedures are followed; the governor responsible for safeguarding regularly reviews the school's work with senior leaders.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Students are proud of their school, and enthusiastic about their learning. They show great respect for their teachers and listen carefully to teachers' instructions and to each other. Behaviour in lessons is often exemplary and, even where students with behavioural difficulties are taught together and can become over-excited, they are well managed so that learning is not disrupted. Students told inspectors that this is typically the case.
- Behaviour around the large school site is calm and orderly. Inspectors observed students queuing quietly and sensibly for their lunch without requiring to be supervised. They wear their uniform with pride and show respect for their learning environment, so that there is no graffiti or litter. Students are polite to adults and get on well together. Inspectors were very impressed by their courtesy, such as holding doors open or offering to show the way.
- Students are keen to take responsible roles, such as that of prefect or house leader, and they take their responsibilities seriously, providing support for younger students. Students say that they have a voice within the school. As junior house leaders, they are consulted on all aspects of the schools' work and school leaders are quick to respond to their views.
- Attendance is consistently above average and students are punctual to lessons, despite the huge school site.
- Behaviour is closely monitored and comprehensive records are kept which show a marked decline in incidents of poor behaviour. Students know that the school has high expectations for behaviour and

respond exceptionally well. Thorough procedures are in place to monitor the attendance and behaviour of students on alternative provision.

- Behaviour in the sixth form is also exemplary. Students take an active role in the life of the school and community. They provide support and mentoring for younger students, and act as classroom assistants and sports leaders. Their attendance and punctuality are above average.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. The school takes exceptional steps to ensure the safety of students. Students told inspectors that they feel very safe and that there is always someone they can turn to for help and support. They say that there is little bullying and that the school manages any incidents quickly and effectively. They say that racism or homophobia of any sort is not tolerated.
- Inspectors noted that students act sensibly and safely in potentially hazardous situations. For example, a group of Year 7 students were observed during a cookery session taking great care in a crowded classroom where there were hot ovens. They showed an excellent awareness of health and safety rules.
- Almost all parents and staff, who expressed a view, said that students behave well and are kept safe.

The quality of teaching is good

- Leaders' rigorous monitoring of all aspects of teaching throughout the year and the progress that students make shows that most teaching, including in the sixth form, has improved and is now good, with much that is outstanding.
- Where students make the fastest progress, teachers have high expectations, make the assessment criteria clear and enable students to check for themselves how well they are doing. For example, in an English lesson observed, students compiled a checklist to ensure that they included all writing features that would secure a high grade in their forthcoming assessment. Here, the teacher's organised approach and good subject knowledge established a systematic method of working that enabled students to apply this to different tasks.
- Literacy and numeracy are promoted well across different subjects, with teachers placing a strong focus on the technical language for each subject and frequently using graphs, for example, to present data.
- Most teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, providing opportunities for students to work together, promoting the development of teamwork and leadership skills. For example, in art, each class has appointed art leaders who help ensure that resources are distributed, leaving the teacher free to provide individual support.
- Relationships between adults and students are warm and classrooms calm, despite some classes being large. Teachers manage these groups well and keep a good overview of all students so that they can quickly intervene to address, for example, a common misconception.
- Additional adults, including members of the sixth form, provide excellent support in lessons for disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those in the specially resourced provision. Sixth form students, for example, mentor dyslexic students and subject-specialist teaching assistants provide expert support, particularly where these students are taught in small groups. Here teachers ensure that they build students' confidence by enabling them to build and practise their skills step by step.
- Most teachers plan tasks that provide appropriate challenge and support for the range of ability in their classes, so that students do not find tasks too easy or too difficult. There is a strong focus in all lessons on how to reach the highest grade and an expectation that all will aspire to achieve their best. Teachers know their students well and will often challenge the most-able students individually with an extension task or, as in an art lesson observed, by challenging them to be creative and adventurous in their approach. A small minority of teachers, however, do not consistently plan tasks or use questioning that fully challenges and stretches the full ability range.

- Students have a good understanding of their challenging targets and can describe what they need to do to achieve them. This is aided by the established marking practice across the school, where students are informed about the things they have done well, their 'working-at' grade and the next steps they need to take to move their learning on. They are then expected to respond to this advice by redrafting or making corrections to show that they understand. Not all teachers check that students have completed this response effectively.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Students join the school with basic skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that are typically above average. The proportion of Year 11 students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C including English and mathematics has been above average over the past two years and current assessments indicate that, by the end of 2015, standards will have risen further. Attainment in English and science, identified as a weakness in the previous inspection, has improved strongly.
- The proportion of students making and exceeding expected progress rates in English over the past two years has also improved strongly and the current cohort are predicted to make outstanding progress by the end of their course. The rates of progress in mathematics, outstanding in 2013, fell slightly in 2014 as a result of changes to grade boundaries. Here too, assessments indicate that progress rates will rise again for the current Year 11. There is no significant difference in achievement between the very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and other students.
- Over the past three years, overall standards in the sixth form, although above average, have remained static. Students consistently make good progress.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs has improved strongly. It is now good because the support they receive is so well organised. Leaders ensure that students provided for by the resourced provision are fully included and are not treated differently from other students. All achieve well. All teachers are provided with clear details about how best to ensure these students' good achievement.
- Over the past three years, the gap between the attainment of disadvantaged students and other students in the school and students nationally has narrowed. In 2013, disadvantaged students were just over a grade below their classmates and all students nationally in English and mathematics. This gap narrowed in 2014. As a result of the strong focus by leaders on the achievement of this group, the gap in the proportion making or exceeding expected progress in these subjects for current students has narrowed further or closed altogether, particularly for those in Key Stage 3, where there is now no gap.
- All teachers identify the most-able students in their planning of learning and leaders check on their progress. The rates of progress of these students are increasing year on year. The school focuses strongly on this group of students and the provision to promote their achievement and raise their aspirations is exemplary, including providing university visits and careers guidance from an early age. All students identified as most able are set exceptionally challenging targets with the expectation that they will make accelerated progress. The most-able mathematicians are entered for two courses in mathematics, preparing them well for advanced level study.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is used appropriately to ensure that those with low literacy and numeracy skills on entry to the school catch up quickly. The QEGS Reads sessions at the end of the school day promote a love of reading and boys particularly told inspectors how much they enjoy these effective sessions.
- No students are entered early for GCSE.
- All students on alternative provision achieved well, including in English and mathematics.

The sixth form provision is good

- All groups of students make good progress in the sixth form. The sixth form is popular and has increased in size over recent years, with more students are staying on to the sixth form after their GCSE courses. In

2014, this retention rate was well above the national average, as was the proportion staying on to complete their courses in Year 13. The sixth form is now attracting an increased number of students from other schools.

- Over the past three years, standards have remained above the national average. There is no significant difference between the performance of different groups of students, including the disabled, those who have special educational needs or the disadvantaged. In 2014, boys were outperformed by girls and this is now being addressed for current students. All students are expected to resit their GCSE English and mathematics examinations until they achieve at least a grade C.
- Leaders' monitoring and records of students' achievement over time shows that the quality of teaching is consistently good. Students say that teachers provide good support, both in the feedback they provide on their work and their willingness to spend time providing one-to-one support. Students value being grouped for form sessions by subject, so that they can receive extra subject support from their form tutor.
- The sixth form fully meets the current standards for 16–19 study programmes. Some work-related courses were introduced for the first time in 2014. There is a strong focus on improving employability skills, and extensive opportunities are offered for work experience. A wide enrichment programme enhances students' experience and enables them to develop personal and leadership skills. These are greatly appreciated by students, who act as excellent role models for students in the main school.
- All students went on to further or higher education, employment or entered apprenticeship schemes in 2014, with an increasing number year on year being offered places at Oxbridge universities.
- Many opportunities are provided to explore contemporary issues; for example, British values and moral issues, including sexism and extremism. This includes opportunities for film making on current issues. This provides outstanding opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their understanding of the responsibilities of citizenship.
- Students speak highly of the head of sixth form and are aware of her high expectations of all they do. They value the careers guidance and support for university application they receive and say they are well cared for.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136972
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	450866

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	1301
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Simon Griffiths
Headteacher	Anne Martin
Date of previous school inspection	24 April 2013
Telephone number	01335 343685
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