

Queen's Croft High School

Birmingham Road, Lichfield, WS13 6PJ

Inspection dates 6–7 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students' achievements across the school are good. Most make at least good progress, and many make outstanding progress from low starting points.
- Students with severe learning difficulties and those known to be eligible for pupil premium make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy.
- The sixth form is good. Students make good progress on the courses they study and are well prepared for the next stage of their lives.
- Students' learning is good and sometimes outstanding as a result of good teaching. Teaching in mathematics is outstanding, enabling most students to make outstanding progress in this subject.
- Students are well motivated because staff maintain excellent relationships with them and use well-chosen resources to provide interesting activities.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are eager to learn and most attend regularly. They stay safe around the school.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have sustained good teaching and good achievement since the previous inspection. Assessment systems have improved and the range of work-related courses has increased.
- Governors provide good support and effectively hold leaders to account for pupils' performance. Together with senior leaders, they are demonstrating good capacity for continued improvement.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- More-able students do not make as much progress as other groups of students because their learning is not always extended sufficiently.
- Students do not always know how to improve their work when it is marked.
- The leaders responsible for English, mathematics and the different key stages do not analyse the progress different groups of students are making rigorously enough to fully inform their improvement priorities.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 lessons and saw all teachers teaching. Ten of these lessons were seen jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors heard students read in lessons and looked at samples of students' work with a senior leader.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, senior leaders, subject leaders, key stage leaders, six members of the governing body and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors took account of 22 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They met two parents and held telephone discussions with five other parents to seek their views. They also looked at the 45 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a wide range of documents including policies and procedures for safeguarding, attendance figures, records of behaviour, governors' minutes, the school's self-evaluation summary and development plan, information about students' progress over time and the destinations of school leavers in recent years.

Inspection team

Declan McCarthy, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Simon Mosley	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Queen's Croft High is a large special school which provides for students with a range of disabilities and special educational needs, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. The number of students has increased significantly since the previous inspection with the sixth form almost doubling in size.
- The majority of students in Key Stages 3 and 4 have moderate or severe learning difficulties. An increasing proportion has additional disabilities and special educational needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder, and speech, language and communication difficulties. Nearly all students in the sixth form have severe learning difficulties and a significant proportion have more complex needs, such as autistic spectrum disorder.
- Most students are from White British backgrounds. A few speak English as an additional language.
- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school receives pupil premium funding for an above-average proportion of students. This is additional funding for those known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from a family with a parent in the armed forces.
- Since the last inspection, the school has become part of a limited company with other special schools in Staffordshire.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of more-able students and improve teaching across the school by ensuring that:
 - more-able students extend their thinking through tasks which challenge their learning
 - students are given clear guidance on how to improve their written work
 - leaders in charge of English, mathematics and key stages rigorously analyse the progress of different groups of students, in order to sharpen their improvement plans.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Students achieve well. They enter the school with very low levels of attainment due to the nature and complexity of their disabilities and special educational needs. This varies from year to year. For example, the proportion of students achieving five A* to G grades declined in 2012. In 2013, a different group of Year 11 students did better. All students who entered for GCSE in art and design, science, English and mathematics gained an A* to G pass.
- Students' overall progress improved significantly in 2013, especially for those known to be eligible for free schools meals. Performance data at the end of Year 11 show that the proportion of students making the expected progress in English was higher than in other special schools, although the proportion exceeding expected progress was lower. In mathematics, the proportions of students making and exceeding expected progress were double those found nationally. Pupils make also good progress in other subjects.
- The school's records show that most students are making the expected levels of progress across the school. Many are exceeding these levels in English and in mathematics where progress is strongest.
- The systems for tracking and recording students' progress are accurate and have significantly improved since the last inspection. Teachers' assessments are checked for accuracy by other teachers and leaders in the school, and meetings are held with other special schools to confirm them.
- Good progress over time for nearly all groups of students, including the few who speak English as an additional language, was also seen in the work in their books.
- Students with severe learning difficulties make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy because the additional support provided, particularly in developing communication and language skills, enables them to speed up their learning.
- Similar high quality support also enables students who are eligible for the pupil premium to make outstanding progress in literacy and numeracy.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress and achieve success in a range of relevant qualifications which prepare them well for the next stage of their lives. As a result of effective leadership of the sixth form, nearly all students enter further education and continue to follow their courses one year later.
- Performance data show that more-able students made less progress than other groups in both 2012 and 2013. In discussion, more-able students said they were not given homework and a few said that their work was too easy. This was confirmed in students' books and reflected in the school's own data.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The work seen during the inspection, combined with the school's records of teaching and students' progress over time, shows that teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. Outstanding teaching is evident in English, drama, mathematics, science and sixth form

horticulture. Teaching in the sixth form is good and occasionally outstanding.

- The teaching of mathematics is outstanding because expectations are high and students are given excellent feedback on how well they are doing in lessons and what they need to do to reach higher examination grades. As a result, most students, including the more able, make exceptional progress in this subject.
- Students confirmed that they enjoy learning because they like their teachers and want to do their very best. They also said that they liked their activities. This was seen in a horticulture lesson where students greatly enjoyed planting trees. They listened carefully and followed the instructions of both the teacher and teaching assistant consistently. They worked together very well to ensure they planted new trees carefully, developing skills quickly to prepare them well for life beyond school.
- Students acquire the basic skills of communication, literacy and numeracy quickly because teaching of these subjects is at least good and staff use a variety of practical resources and communication aids such as signing or symbols to ensure students participate in learning as well as they can.
- High quality additional one-to-one and small group support for pupils with more complex needs such as autistic spectrum disorder and those who are known to be eligible for pupil premium enables most of them to speed up their learning quickly.
- Teachers usually deploy teaching assistants effectively. This enables all students to benefit from additional adult help in breaking learning tasks down into smaller steps, clarifying any misunderstandings and providing encouragement for their learning. As a result, students persist and remain focused on developing their learning. Just occasionally, students' learning is not sufficiently well extended and they make slower progress.
- Assessment information is generally used well to plan activities matched to different abilities. Students usually have a good idea of how well they are doing during a lesson and what they need to do to improve because good feedback is given to them by teachers and teaching assistants. However, they do not always know how to improve their learning when their books are marked.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. It is typically good and sometimes outstanding. As a result, exclusions are rare and incidents of inappropriate behaviour reduce over time. Students who show the most challenging behaviour make good progress in learning self-control as a result of effective behaviour management plans.
- Students throughout the school, including those in the sixth form, have good attitudes to learning. As a result they typically remain focused on their tasks and try their hardest. Occasionally a few pupils lose interest, but they respond well to the good management of their behaviour through the systematic use of rewards and sanctions. All groups of students, including those with more complex needs and more-able students, said they enjoyed learning.
- Different groups of students said there was no bullying and if there were any, it would be dealt with effectively by staff. All students are increasing their awareness of why good behaviour is important in school, at home and in their lives.

- Students are polite and courteous to visitors and usually show respect for one another through, for example, working well together in learning activities.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Staff assess any potential risks students may experience in school. The assessments of potential risks for school trips, including the residential skiing trip, are thorough.
- Students handle equipment safely and stay safe during practical activities such as science. They move safely from one area of the school to another. Students have an increasing awareness of the safe use of the internet and use this safely in school. Parents, staff and students believe that all students are safe in school.
- Most pupils, other than those who are absent for hospitalisation, illness or attending therapy, attend regularly and arrive punctually for lessons.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher is highly respected for his work in driving improvements forward and is ably supported by his senior leaders. He has ensured strong support from parents, and good staff morale as reflected in their highly positive questionnaire returns. As a result, good quality teaching has been sustained and the issue identified at the last inspection has been addressed well with good improvements to the assessment system.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching on a regular basis. The outcomes are used to set clear objectives for improving staff performance. These are closely linked to the national *Teachers' Standards* and school development plan priorities. Staff receive good ongoing training to enhance their skills, and good teaching is rewarded.
- The school's view of its own performance is generous because insufficient account has been taken of the impact of teaching on learning over time on different groups of pupils across the school. Subject and key stage leaders have developed their own action plans to improve their subjects and are continuously improving their systems for tracking students' progress. However, they are not using the information about the progress of different groups of students rigorously enough to ensure their self-evaluation is realistic and fully effective in driving improvement.
- Good leadership of the sixth form has ensured that students are well prepared for further education and training.
- Some excellent opportunities to enrich learning across the school include, for example, the annual residential skiing trip to Italy, visits to the outdoor and adventurous activities centre, and to London. There is a strong emphasis on developing students' ability to make their own choices and their skills in communication, literacy and numeracy to prepare them for when they leave school.
- Good links with local colleges, good careers guidance and a well-thought out programme of work-related learning subjects prepare students well for further education courses such as construction, hair and beauty and land management.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good as a result of good opportunities for reflection, the building confidence and self-esteem, and a strong emphasis on developing social skills and resilience. Students have good opportunities to learn about diversity through, for example, world religions and subjects such as art, geography and food technology.

They also learn about the Italian culture and speak a few words in Italian.

- Leaders are making good use of pupil premium funding in developing smaller class sizes, and providing additional small group and individual support to enable these students to catch up quickly with their classmates. This funding is also used to subsidise additional educational trips and visits. As a result, most of these students are making excellent progress in learning and in their personal development.
- The local authority is providing appropriate support for the school in the annual review of its work. It also provides ongoing training opportunities for governors and staff.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have carried out a full audit of their skills and identified strengths and areas for development. They have a good understanding of the impact of teaching on students' learning through their regular visits to school and scrutiny of reports from senior leaders. They ensure good procedures for managing staff performance, including that of the headteacher. Governors are making good use of data to influence the school's priorities for improvement and are holding the school to account for its spending, particularly of the pupil premium, to achieve value for money. They ensure that all safeguarding requirements are met by regularly updating policies and by checking that the procedures for vetting the suitability of staff and visitors are rigorous.

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	124521
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	431586

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	187
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	47
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Moseley
Headteacher	John Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2011
Telephone number	01543 510669
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