

Queen's Croft High School

Birmingham Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire WS13 6PJ

Inspection dates

26–27 April 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- School leaders are unwavering in their commitment to making sure that the school secures successful outcomes for all its pupils.
- Pupils make good progress, often from very low starting points when they enter school. They achieve good results in a range of subjects. They are very well prepared for their next steps in education, employment or training.
- Pupils are well behaved. They display excellent manners and show consideration for others. They are proud of what they have achieved at the school. They grow by being part of a caring community.
- The curriculum is appropriate and interesting. Pupils and students receive high-quality support, advice and guidance. They are presented with choices and options at different stages of their time in school.
- The support for pupils with complex needs has been developed sensitively and creatively to promote a sensory curriculum appropriate to their needs.
- The sixth form is well led, and students are happy, safe and make good progress. They receive very good-quality advice. This helps them make choices about the next steps of their education.
- Governors know the school well. They carry out their roles effectively. They ask challenging questions of leaders and hold the school to account effectively.
- Teaching is generally good. There are some inconsistencies in pupils' learning when teaching is not matched closely enough to all pupils' needs.
- Teachers and leaders are developing revised ways of assessing pupils' progress. They know that they need to continue to extend this work, so that they can use this information to plan the next steps of learning for all pupils and students.
- The school has grown over the past few years. Higher numbers of pupils with more varied needs have put extra pressure on school leaders and staff. Necessary changes to improve the impact of the school on outcomes for its pupils have not always been accepted successfully.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further accelerate the pace of school improvement by working with staff to develop their confidence to accept change and the revised policies and procedures of the school.
- Continue to develop and refine the system for recording and tracking pupils' progress across the curriculum including ensuring that good practice is shared across the school, so teachers are all identifying how pupils are achieving targets and next steps for learning.
- Improve teaching by ensuring that learning tasks are more consistently matched to meet all pupils' needs.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has steered the school through challenging times. He leads the school with vigour and an unshakeable commitment to ensuring that all pupils, whatever their level of need or previous experiences, are supported to receive the best education possible. There is a focus and drive from the leadership team on improving the school still further.
- An increase in pupil numbers and changes in the range and complexity of needs have put extra pressure on the school and its leadership team. This pressure has meant that school leaders have not been able to put in place some elements of the school's improvement strategy as quickly or fully as they had intended.
- School leaders have put in place effective actions to address the areas for improvement identified in the previous Ofsted report. Reviews of the curriculum and assessment policies have led to new courses and accreditation and feedback procedures being introduced. These have helped to raise the achievement of the most able pupils and ensure that they are given clear guidance on how to improve their written work.
- The school leadership team has been working below its full capacity for most of this year. Strategies have been put in place to develop the role of the middle leaders and to increase their contribution to the effectiveness of the school and its teaching. This work has begun to help them contribute fully to focused and effective development of staff skills.
- School leaders and staff have worked over the past two years to develop a varied and stimulating curriculum appropriate for all pupils. The curriculum is broad and balanced and enables pupils and students to take their next steps in education or training with informed confidence. It has been revised recently to accommodate the changing needs of the school's population and ensure that all pupils have equal opportunities to gain meaningful outcomes.
- The school's approach identifies a learning path for every pupil and provides additional support and tuition where needed. This ensures that disadvantaged pupils catch up and make excellent progress alongside all other pupils.
- The school's provision for pupils' social, spiritual, cultural and moral development makes a very effective contribution to pupils' behaviour and welfare. Pupils discuss current topics in the news and explore their ideas about the wider world. Pupils are taught to look after their environment, and this respect is reflected in their behaviour and around the school site. There is a shared understanding of tolerance for others, promoted through lessons and assemblies.
- Additional funding from both the pupil premium grant and the Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used well. It is targeted for maximum impact. Leaders use assessment information to target support for pupils who need extra help to catch up. They measure the impact of what they have put in place and make changes based upon these results.

- Assessment and analysis of pupils' progress throughout the school have continued to be developed, against the backdrop of national changes to assessment in special schools. This continues to be a work in progress which school leaders rightly identify as a priority for ongoing development and extension to all subjects.
- The monitoring of staff performance is used well to focus on improving key aspects of the school's work. The school has appointed two newly qualified teachers and supports a number of trainee teachers and apprentice teaching assistants. The induction and support for these colleagues is carefully shaped so they quickly settle and contribute to the good teaching in the school. All staff receive regular training and support to further develop their skills and effectiveness.
- Parents and carers whom inspectors spoke to recognised the improvements they had seen at the school and their comments were overwhelmingly positive. Responses from the Parent View online survey were more mixed, with a majority of positive responses and a small number of complaints. These focused on the quality of communication between school and home and the sharing of information about progress with parents.
- Some of the changes and the speed at which they have been implemented have not been well accepted by all members of staff. This has caused some tensions and ill feeling among staff and was reflected in a number of negative comments made in the online staff survey. It is clear that there is a need for school leaders to do more work to raise staff morale and draw staff together. This will ensure a more consistent approach to implementing policies and practices.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is strong and well led. Governors know the school well. They gather information about how well the school is doing from a wide range of sources. They check on the accuracy of the information on which they base their decisions. They have supported and rigorously challenged the headteacher. As a result, the school has continued to improve under the strategic guidance of the governing body.
- Governors have a clear and detailed understanding of what the school has done to address previously identified areas for development. They recognise the issues facing the school at the moment and the effects of the number of changes made over a relatively short period of time. They are supportive of the leadership team but not afraid to ask probing questions to make sure they are fully informed of the work of the school. They challenge the school to constantly improve.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The work of the school's safeguarding team to keep pupils safe and secure is detailed and thorough. Pupils feel safe at school. Pupils understand potential risks to their safety and can articulate how and why they keep themselves safe. Parents are assured that their children are well looked after and cared for.
- Vigilance about safeguarding in this school is seen as everyone's prime concern. Procedures and communication systems have been overhauled to ensure that nobody

slips through the net. Where there have been concerns about pupil safety, action plans have been put in place and followed to ensure that pupils are kept safe.

- Staff are committed in their work to keep pupils safe and reduce risk. This applies to all areas of the school environment, including the sensory and forest school areas. Regular high-quality training ensures that the practice of all members of staff is completely up to date. Governors and leaders recognise this as one of their paramount responsibilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching across the school is good, although there is some minor variability. Teaching enables pupils to make good progress, both academically and personally. Teachers know their pupils well and have, generally, high expectations of what all their pupils can achieve. Pupils show excellent attitudes in class, enjoy learning and are motivated to do their best.
- The wide range of pupils' needs are met in a focused manner designed to provide clear targets for each individual. Pupils are taught in appropriate groups and settings. Clear routines help pupils feel secure. A real strength of the school is the provision for pupils with complex needs, where a sensory curriculum has been introduced to support their learning and self-expression most effectively.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are overwhelmingly positive. These relationships underpin learning in classes. Pupils are ready to learn and keen to take part in lessons. Pupils are challenged and stretched to do their best. They are often enthusiastic and eager to respond to questions. In a mathematics lesson, they seemed to be bursting at the seams with their readiness to give their answers and explain what they had been learning.
- There is an overwhelmingly calm atmosphere around school and in classes. Pupils showed determination to persist with tasks, even when they find them difficult or challenging. When pupils become anxious or upset, there are clear strategies in place to support pupils while not distracting other pupils from their learning.
- In better lessons, good teaching ensures that all pupils are included and making progress. Teachers check on understanding by listening carefully to pupils and clearly explain ideas and meanings. They ask probing questions which extend and develop learning. Teachers and teaching assistants give pupils opportunities to explain their thinking and learn from their mistakes. They use questioning effectively to challenge and check on pupils' understanding.
- Teaching assistants are well deployed, fully aware of their role in the classroom and, where the provision is at its best, the impact of teaching assistants is indistinguishable from that of teachers. They understand the type of support and interventions pupils need to be able to access their learning and are skilled at arranging this.
- Teachers use assessment information available to inform their planning for lessons. This promotes learning and identifies the next steps pupils need to improve their performance. They also use the pupil's targets from their educational, health and care plans to develop independent progress steps. Pupils are aware of these targets and can explain what they need to do to meet them.

- The school has rightly identified assessment as an area for continued development. A new system is being set up, starting from an established baseline for all pupils. There is still work to be done to develop and embed this to ensure consistency of approach and recording of progress by all teachers in all subjects.
- In most lessons, pupils are actively engaged on purposeful tasks which build on their previous learning. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons. Occasionally tasks are not adapted or differentiated enough to meet the different needs of all pupils in the class. When pupils cannot manage the complexity of the activities, they are sometimes left waiting for support before they can continue with their work. Variations in the approach taken by staff sometimes lead to some inconsistencies in practice and in the feedback pupils are given about their work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are always positive. They are proud of what they can do and how well the school supports them. This has a strong impact on the progress they make, both academically and socially.
- The excellent relationships between staff and pupils are reflected in the relationships between pupils. There is a culture of caring for one another and wanting to help each other do their best. Pupils were particularly positive about the support they receive from their teachers and teaching assistants.
- Pupils understand the different forms that bullying can take. They told inspectors there is some bullying, but it does not happen very often and is always dealt with effectively by staff. They have a counsellor they can speak to if they are worried about anything.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. They talked about the issues they had learned about in assemblies and then discussed in lessons for personal, social and health education. In religious education, a group of pupils discussed sensitively how beliefs can affect how animals are treated. They related this to what they had seen on the news about the dangers of plastic in the oceans and what they thought about animal testing.
- The school has a large and complex site. Staff manage this well and supervision at the start and end of the day and at breaktime and lunchtime is very effective. School leaders have developed areas of the site to support pupils' needs and interests. Several staff and pupils commented to inspectors on the benefits they were gaining from the sensory and the forest school areas in particular.
- Pupils told inspectors there were areas of the school which could be better. They talked about the toilets being unappealing, and that the increase in numbers sometimes makes it difficult to move around school easily.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. The conduct of pupils around the school and in classes was excellent. Inspectors saw no examples of low-level disruption during the inspection.
- Pupils develop excellent social skills, including taking turns when speaking, listening to one another and showing exemplary manners to staff and visitors. Behaviour does not need to be constantly managed by staff, because pupils have learned to be self-regulating and show respect for others. Pupils' behaviour at times of day when they are less directly supervised, such as breaktimes and lunchtimes, is always good.
- Behaviour in lessons is good and often outstanding, with pupils taking a real interest in their learning. They are keen to support each other. In a physical education lesson, for example, pupils were sensitive to the needs of those who found the activity challenging and ready to offer help.
- Rewards and sanctions are matched appropriately to the age, needs and understanding of pupils. A relatively high number of disruptive incidents have been caused by a small number of pupils. These have led to a high number of fixed-term exclusions over the past year. School leaders recognise the impact that taking pupils with a wider range of needs has had on the school. They have put in place an action plan aimed at reducing the number of exclusions.
- Attendance for the majority of pupils is good. School leaders have introduced a wide range of carefully targeted, regularly monitored strategic and personalised interventions and encouragements to reduce absence. A number of vulnerable pupils who have historically had very low attendance at their previous schools are being supported by the use of reduced timetables on a short-term basis. The aim for these pupils is to work towards greater inclusion in the school. The school has monitoring processes in place to review the strategy for each of these pupils.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In English, mathematics and personal, social and health education, the great majority of pupils are making good or better progress over time from their starting points. This can be seen in their attitudes, behaviour and learning in lessons, work in their books and the school's analysis of assessment information.
- At the end of their time at the school, pupils move on to the next stage of their education with a range of qualifications. In Year 11, some pupils achieve GCSEs in English, mathematics, art & design, food technology and sciences. Others leave with entry-level certificates and functional skills passes at level 1. Pupils also work towards a Duke of Edinburgh award.
- Pupils are set ambitious targets, based on information from the school's own baseline assessments and their education, health and care plans. Pupils' progress is tracked and measured against aspirational targets for good or better progress. This ensures that there is no ceiling put on expectations for any pupil's progress.
- Progress since September for all groups is good or better for the core areas of English and mathematics. Pupils are given feedback about their achievements and guidance as

to how to improve their performance and the quality of their work. This reflects the new assessment policy which was developed last year, but it was not seen consistently applied in pupils' books in all subjects.

- Pupils make good progress in developing their skills for life. This is clearly seen in pupils' work and shown in their attitudes, behaviour and conversations. It is particularly apparent in the impact the school has in removing barriers to learning for some pupils with complex and profound learning difficulties who face specific challenges.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those who are looked after, make the same good progress in English and mathematics from their starting points as their peers.
- Pupils in Year 11 are well prepared for the next stage of their education. High-quality careers advice is designed to find the best possible pathway for every pupil. Pupils are given options about which courses they follow in key stage 4. This ensures that all pupils are clear about the choices available to them and how these choices can help them meet their aspirations.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Since the last inspection, school leaders have identified how to improve the school's offer to post-16 students. They have introduced a variety of options for students to select the most appropriate learning pathway to meet their individual abilities, interests and aspirations. Most of the students stay on from Year 11 at the school, but some enter the sixth form from other settings.
- Students benefit from a wide range of options, both academic and vocational, in the well-led 16 to 19 study programmes. The sixth-form leader and her team ensure that students experience and learn from a curriculum that focuses on what they need to do to prosper as young adults and prepare them for their future beyond school.
- Students follow one of five pathways, with qualifications drawn from the areas of life skills, employability and further education. They continue to build on their achievements at the end of key stage 4 in English and mathematics. All pathways include a strong element of personal, social, health and citizenship education designed to support students in their life after school. All sixth-form students complete their courses.
- The quality of impartial careers advice and the experiences to which learners have access are good and help students make informed decisions about their futures. Students spoke fluently to inspectors about what they hoped to do after they leave school and could identify how the choices they had made were helping them to achieve these goals. Nearly all students stay on in full-time education at a college after school.
- Students' behaviour in the sixth form is very good. Students said they feel safe and that school has helped them to develop. They were happy and were positive about their experiences in sixth form.
- School leaders have systems in place to track students and their subsequent destinations. They recognise the need to adapt and change the curriculum on offer to offer a range of courses appropriate to the changing needs of students each year.

- Students typically make good progress across a range of subjects. However, teachers do not always plan lessons carefully enough to ensure that all pupils are offered effective challenge. This means that occasionally progress slows. Consequently, some activities do not fully capture students' imagination.

School details

Unique reference number	124521
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10025417

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Special
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Katy Hope
Headteacher	Mr Peter Hawksworth
Telephone number	01543227245
Website	http://www.queenscroft.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@queenscroft.staff.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 March 2014

Information about this school

- Queen’s Croft High School is a secondary special school which caters for pupils who have a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. These include moderate learning difficulties, severe learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorders, speech and communication disorders, and social, emotional and mental health difficulties.
- The school has grown over the past few years. There are more pupils, and the range of their needs is greater. The post-16 provision has also been extended. These changes have largely been in response to the changing nature of provision for children with special educational needs in the local authority.

- All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan.
- Most pupils are White British, with a small number having other ethnic backgrounds.
- All pupils are placed in the school by Staffordshire local authority. Currently there are 14 pupils who are looked after.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below the national average.
- The school has a number of pupils, currently five, who are accessing reduced timetables in agreement with parents and following Staffordshire local authority's guidelines.
- The school has a sixth form. Students do not attend any alternative provision for their education or training.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all year groups, covering a range of subjects. This included short visits that were conducted with the headteacher or assistant headteacher. Inspectors observed break and lunchtime sessions and scrutinised a range of pupils' work in detail.
- Inspectors held meetings and discussions with pupils, teaching assistants, teachers, including a group of recently qualified teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders, the headteacher and governors. The lead inspector also spoke to a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors spoke to a number of parents before school started. They also took account of 21 responses to the Ofsted online parent questionnaire Parent View. There were 65 responses to the online staff questionnaire. There were no responses to the pupil survey.
- The inspection team took account of a wide range of documentation, including the school's website; the school's self-evaluation and development plans; records from external reviews; records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance; the school's own assessment information relating to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching; and minutes from governors' meetings.
- Inspectors reviewed the single central record, safeguarding records and associated policies and procedures, including checks on the suitability of staff.

Inspection team

Robert Roalfe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Matt Wilson	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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