

Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101358
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	307665
Inspection date	9 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Lynn Bappa

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Boys
Number on roll	
School	1185
6th form	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Barrie R Martin FRICS IRRV
Headteacher	Dr John Marincowitz PhD FRSA
Date of previous school inspection	13 September 2004
School address	Queen's Road Barnet EN5 4DQ
Telephone number	020 8441 4646
Fax number	020 8440 7500

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. They evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- students' progress through the school, including the sixth form
- aspects of students' personal development and well-being
- the quality of extra-curricular provision and enrichment
- aspects of leadership and management.

Evidence was gained from lesson observations, from discussions with leaders and students and from evaluation of a range of documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation were not justified. These have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Founded in 1573, Queen Elizabeth's is a selective, foundation school. Both the school and the sixth form are larger than average. The school is very popular and over-subscribed. Boys sit entrance tests to join the school in Year 7, with some places being allocated on musical ability. A much higher proportion than is the national average come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students learning English as an additional language is also above average. The largest ethnic group, apart from White British, is Asian. The percentage of students with learning difficulties and disabilities is much smaller than average. The school was awarded music specialist status in 2004, has Investors in People status and several other national awards, including Healthy School status.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Queen Elizabeth's is an outstanding school. It is held in very high regard by the vast majority of students and their parents, and rightly so. One parent summed up the views of many when she wrote, 'The school is phenomenal and we are extremely pleased!' Students flourish in a climate that ensures that they achieve their very best academically and personally. Excellence pervades all aspects of its work.

Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels. A real strength of the school is the high quality of teamwork and commitment which ensures that everyone, including support, premises and office staff play an integral part in moving the school forward. The headmaster and his two second masters provide inspirational leadership and is held in the highest regard by staff, students and parents alike. One parent summed up their views when he wrote, 'The headmaster is first class!' Relationships with parents are very positive and their views are taken fully into account. The school looks to the future with confidence. Leaders have an excellent understanding of its many strengths and the few minor weaknesses, and take highly successful action to bring about improvement. The school has successfully tackled the few areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. It has an outstanding capacity to improve further.

Students show great pride in their school's specialist music status. This is having a positive impact on their academic achievement. Standards in music are exceptionally high, for example. A very high proportion of students take part in musical activities, including a Big Band, a Saxophone Quartet, several choirs and an Indian Music Ensemble. This makes a major contribution to the students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A new, and popular, A level course in music technology has been introduced. Management of the school's work as a specialist music college is excellent and fosters the school's vision of continually seeking to raise students' expectations and achievements. Specialist status has also contributed to improvement by allowing the school to extend its community provision, develop excellent links with partner schools and significantly improve its resources.

Key to the success of the school, and threaded through its fabric, is the focus on encouraging the boys to achieve both academic and personal excellence. This is evident at all levels. The standards reached by students in external tests and examinations are exceptionally high, and are steadily improving over time. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* and A grades at GCSE has been rising steadily in recent years and far exceeds selective school norms. For example, in 2007 48% of the grades achieved were A*. Results in Key Stage 3 tests also improved in 2007 and remain exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Despite these very high standards, the school is constantly trying to drive them even higher and regularly exceeds its challenging targets. Students, irrespective of ethnicity or background, make excellent progress and their all-round achievements are outstanding, comparing extremely favourably with other selective schools nationally. This is because the school's ethos motivates students to perform to the best of their ability and makes them thirsty to learn. A strong work ethic pervades. Teaching is confident and collaborative, with students sharing ideas and listening with maturity to their teachers and to each other. Teachers build on students well above average prior attainment very successfully through excellent teaching that encourages the boys to develop independent learning skills and an enthusiasm for learning. As one boy commented, 'The culture here is to want to learn and do well.' As a result, students are completely involved in their work, whether it is composing a piece of music, writing a poem in German or drawing a self-portrait.

Excellent achievement is a result, not only of high quality teaching, but also of the outstanding curriculum. A particularly strong feature of the curriculum is the superb range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Students speak particularly highly of these, saying that the only problem is that there are so many things to do that it becomes difficult to make a choice. Sporting activities are very popular and large numbers of boys take part in the excellent range provided, including rugby, Eton Fives and fitness training. Many of these take place on Saturdays, and are extremely well attended by both students and teachers. Boys are particularly appreciative of the excellent facilities, especially the new eight-lane swimming pool. Although sports and music are especially popular, the school's many clubs cater for a very wide range of interests and are extremely well-attended and often over-subscribed. The Forensic Club, for example, is popular with younger students and the recently introduced Mandarin Club already has a long waiting list.

High academic standards have not been achieved at the expense of students' personal development and well-being, which are also outstanding. Students show high levels of confidence and maturity. Behaviour is exemplary and students show great courtesy towards each other and to visitors. They especially value the excellent opportunities they have for exercising responsibility, both within the school and the wider community. As one student commented, 'We help to manage the school - it's our school.' The Student Conference gives very good opportunities for their views to be heard and the popular House system promotes friendly competition and positive relationships between older and younger students.

Safeguarding and child protection procedures are fully in place. Staff know their students well and they provide outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for them. Every department, for example, has a clinic, a club and competitions to provide support for students who are struggling, extra activities for those who are interested and opportunities to be stretched for the most talented. This is a safe place where students thrive and develop into highly articulate and mature young men who are exceedingly well prepared for their future lives.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 1

Provision in the sixth form is outstanding. Because of excellent teaching, a stimulating curriculum and their own positive attitudes to learning, students reach very high standards and make excellent progress in both their academic and personal development. The percentage of A and B grades in 2007 (97%) far exceeds selective school norms. Students are articulate and confident learners and show genuine pride in their achievements. They relish the opportunities for intellectual challenge in their lessons and develop exceptional independent learning skills. Teaching is both scholarly and exciting and provides the foundations for students' impressive progress. Students praise the teachers for their level of dedication and support both in lessons and outside normal hours. The curriculum is enriched through an excellent range of cross-curricular and extra-curricular provision. Retention rates are high and increasing. Almost all students leave the school to study in higher education, with increasingly high proportions being accepted into the most prestigious universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. Leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. Leaders have a clear sense of purpose and high expectations of work and commitment from students.

What the school should do to improve further

- Inspectors judge that there are no significant areas of weakness in the school or sixth form. Minor areas for improvement are already identified in the school's development plan.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1	1
The attendance of learners	1	1
The behaviour of learners	1	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

23 January 2008

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet, Barnet, EN5 4DQ

On behalf of the inspectors who visited your school recently, I should like to thank you for the very warm welcome that you gave us. Thank you particularly to members of the Student Conference, the Sixth Formers who showed me round and the many students who talked with us about their work and shared their opinions of the school. We very much enjoyed our visit. We thought you would like a summary of the inspection findings, but also hope that you will want to read the whole report. We agree with you that you go to an outstanding school and we think that you help to make it such an impressive place to be. This is because you work hard in lessons and enjoy all the many activities that are on offer. We agree with you that there is a superb range of clubs and enrichment activities. You play a significant part in the wider life of the school and the community. The school provides an excellent climate for learning in which you are able to excel. You are taught exceptionally well and, as a result, do extremely well in national tests and examinations and make outstanding progress. Your headmaster, his senior team and all other managers carry out their duties exceptionally well.

Thank you again for your help during our visit, and best wishes and good luck with your work in the future.

Yours faithfully

Dr Lynn Bappa

Lead Inspector