

Queens Park Community School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	101560
Local authority	Brent
Inspection number	376591
Inspection dates	7–8 March 2012
Lead inspector	Clare Gillies

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	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1202
Of which, number on roll in the sixth form	184
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Beard
Headteacher	Mike Hulme
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 November 2008
School address	Aylestone Avenue London NW6 7BQ
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Age group	11–18
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Introduction

Inspection team

Clare Gillies	Additional inspector
Justina Ilochi	Additional inspector
Paul Metcalf	Additional inspector
Miranda Perry	Additional inspector
Jalil Shaikh	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 50 part-lessons, several of which were observed jointly with members of the senior leadership team; they saw 55 teachers in lessons, tutor sessions and an assembly. Meetings were held with senior leaders, middle leaders, governors, staff and students. 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 school's development plan, and at data on exclusions, attendance, current standards and progress. They also looked at the school's analysis of past performance and the quality of teaching. Inspectors considered responses to the questionnaires from 479 parents, over 100 students and over half the staff.

Information about the school

The school is larger than average with more boys than girls. Students come from a wide range of socio-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. Almost four out of five students are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being Black Caribbean, Black African and any other White background. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is much higher than that found nationally; few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school is oversubscribed. A number of students enter the school other than at the usual time, some of whom have experienced circumstances that make them potentially vulnerable. An above average proportion of students have disabilities or special educational needs. The sixth form shares courses with another local sixth form. The school has business and enterprise status. The school is at the heart of the local community and shares its site with a City Learning Centre and children's centre. The school meets the current floor standards which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

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

Overall effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school with a good sixth form. Students are happy, enjoy lessons and participate enthusiastically in the many activities on offer. A respect for diverse faiths, ethnic backgrounds and cultures permeates the extremely harmonious atmosphere. The school is not outstanding because the predominantly good progress students make is not consistent across all subjects and groups of students.
- A-level and GCSE results have gone up significantly since the previous inspection and, in many subjects, they are above average. A relentless drive to improve progress has generated good achievement for practically all students. A few students with special educational needs and/or low reading ages do not make the rapid progress required to catch up with their peers.
- Students' behaviour is good, despite a small minority of parents, carers and students being less positive about it in their questionnaire responses. A major push to improve behaviour, started 18 months ago, has made the school calmer and most lessons proceed without interruption. Exclusions have dropped, attendance is above average, students feel safe and bullying is rare.
- Teaching has improved so that it is now consistently good, and sometimes, but not often enough, outstanding. Teachers know their subjects extremely well and many deliver lessons at a good pace using imaginative resources to stimulate students' interest. The quality of their marking varies and some teachers do not regularly plan work to match students' different levels of prior attainment. The way in which the curriculum supports aspects of pupils' personal development is outstanding.
- Under the headteacher's effective leadership, leaders and managers have established an inclusive school where all students are well supported. Senior leaders assess the quality of teaching accurately and use their findings to inform relevant training for teachers and other staff. Performance management arrangements are robust and teachers know that they are responsible for the standards their students achieve.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the rate of progress for students with low reading ages and/or special educational needs by:
 - reducing the number of targets they are set
 - making targets more precise and measurable over a short time-span.

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers consistently prepare lessons which incorporate work, and questions, at different levels, to match students' abilities and prior attainment
 - generating greater consistency in teachers' marking so that students know exactly what to do to improve
 - checking that students always respond to written comments on their work.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Over 90% of students, and parents and carers too, feel that they make good progress and develop their communication, reading and writing skills well. They are right because most students settle quickly in lessons and are attentive. They have positive and respectful relationships with teachers and discuss tasks and work together collaboratively. When working in groups, students were seen sensitively asking more silent ones to contribute. Students enjoy debating controversial issues, such as similarities and differences between terrorist groups in history, or statistics related to International Women's Day. Students were seen being energetic in physical education lessons and learning about health and fitness. They were seen enthusiastically participating in drama, music and other practical subjects. Even when teachers talk for too long, which happens occasionally, students mostly continue to concentrate.

The percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C GCSE grades, including English and mathematics, has gone up every year since 2007, from below to above the national average. A-level pass grades have also increased since 2007 and students now make good progress. The school has addressed the less successful AS results, partly by having higher entry levels for sixth form courses and by strengthening teaching and learning. Nearly one in four GCSE and one in three A-level results were A*/A grades in 2011. Based on their starting points, by the end of Year 11 in 2011, students had made significantly above average progress in English, mathematics, science and other subjects including business (the school's specialism). Black Caribbean students did not achieve as well as others but the school is aware of this and is working to improve their motivation and work ethic. Girls achieve better than boys but the gap is smaller than seen nationally.

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In English and mathematics in 2011, close to 90% of students with disabilities or special educational needs made more than the expected progress compared with similar students nationally. However, target setting and monitoring of progress are not sharp enough for a small minority of these students and a few others who have low reading ages. For the latter, this is partly because the work they do in school on letters and sounds is not always well matched to their reading books.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is consistently good. This was endorsed by observations during the inspection and by students, parents and carers: 'there are some truly inspirational teachers' observed one parent. A key factor is teachers' excellent subject knowledge, especially evident in sixth form lessons. Another factor is that many teachers pose skilful questions which require students to reply in detail, explain their responses and extend their thinking. Learning in science was outstanding when students studied buoyancy, linked imaginatively to the Titanic. In a few lessons in science and some other subjects, teachers use text books and worksheets too much, restricting time for discussion, or they do not plan work that matches students' abilities and prior attainment, so some finish early and others struggle.

Teachers often move through work at a cracking pace, usually generating good learning but occasionally they try to cram too much into the 45 or 50 minute lessons. Many teachers mark books regularly and write helpful comments about how the student can improve the work but the practice is inconsistent. Even when there is high quality marking, students do not always act upon what is written.

A few parents, carers and students feel that students work alone for too long in mathematics, delivered through a programme specifically for mixed-ability classes. Not all mathematics teachers blend independent learning, exciting resources and whole-class activities well. Students do, however, achieve well in mathematics and it is the most popular A-level subject.

Mixed-ability teaching, a strong feature of the school's approach to learning, is dominant in Years 7 to 10. This has a positive effect on the way the planned curriculum is delivered. Students respect the social equality this approach represents and many of the teaching assistants provide very good support in class. This helps to make mixed-ability teaching successful but, just occasionally, a few students struggle to keep up.

Many lessons and the numerous displays around the school help to develop students' appreciation of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues. For example, they study pilgrimages in religious education, apartheid in personal, social and health education, fair trade in geography and civil rights in the United States of America in history. Teachers often link learning to the real world, seen in a lesson on climate change which used relevant and thought-provoking visual materials.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Attendance has been above average for the last three years and punctuality is good. In the questionnaires, a small minority of parents, carers and students responded that they felt some lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour, and that this is not always managed well. However, in discussion, most students said that the introduction of a new, clear code in September 2010 had made a big difference to their behaviour in lessons and around the school. Although a few teachers may not manage behaviour as well as the large majority, during the inspection students' behaviour in lessons was predominantly good and sometimes exemplary. Movement in the corridors, though occasionally boisterous, was fine.

Exclusions, which have been above average in the past, have fallen, both in terms of the number of students involved and the number of incidents; internal exclusions have also declined. Practically all parents and carers acknowledge that their children feel very safe at school; this is confirmed by students. Senior leaders ensure that the school's zero tolerance of bullying has a high profile all year; they stamp on early signs of cyber-bullying fast, for example, by keeping a careful eye on social networking sites. Students discuss homophobic and prejudicial bullying sensitively and without embarrassment. Bullying is rare and dealt with most effectively.

Students, parents and carers have almost no concerns about safety. Governors, senior leaders and all staff are attentive to detail and ensure the site is secure. Risk assessment, particularly for the numerous trips and visits at home and abroad, is thorough. Senior leaders foster safe behaviour off site by involving themselves in the local community and by promoting the harmony which exists between different groups in the school. Students play a major role in the annual community carnival and many sixth formers do voluntary work in the local area.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, described by one parent as 'approachable, friendly, effective and dynamic', is well respected. His large leadership team, including sixth form leaders, provides good support. Senior leaders evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the quality of teaching, accurately. Their analysis of development areas is honest and realistic, captured in a concise and practical development plan.

The experienced governing body combines support with challenge very effectively. Members, who have a good range of relevant expertise, receive detailed analysis and reviews of performance so they can probe what is happening. The use of data and the quality of analysis were an issue in the previous inspection. This has largely been addressed but sometimes the information given to teachers about their classes lacks uniformity and, sometimes, clarity. Governors and senior leaders ensure that safeguarding arrangements are fully in place and effective.

Fully supported by governors, the school promotes equality and tackles discrimination effectively by its ethos, its philosophy of mixed-ability teaching and by

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giving these aspects a high profile in assemblies, lessons and displays around the school. The school celebrates diversity and different cultures very well, often through cross-curricular themes. Students who speak English as an additional language are welcomed and given good support to cope with work and understand the English examination system. Attention to students' pastoral needs is very good with strong home/school liaison and involvement of external agencies when needed. Despite this, a few parents and carers feel that the school does not respond promptly enough when they have enquiries.

An outstanding element of the curriculum is the way it promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; the excellent personal, social and health education programme is a key element in this. The school's business and enterprise specialism permeates other subjects as well as being a focus for curriculum extension days. Students enjoy these and value their relevance to their futures and the world of work. Extra-curricular activities, clubs and residential and day trips and visits are numerous; the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is popular. Many of these interesting activities strengthen students' creative, artistic and sporting skills. A parent wrote that her son had been given 'opportunities to expand his horizons'.

The relentless and successful drive for improved results is testimony to the headteacher's determination to ensure that all students achieve as well as possible. He, senior leaders and governors are fully aware that results for sixth formers, a few individuals and some subjects can be improved further. Better monitoring and target setting, combined with improved teaching, have contributed to improvements in the past but the school knows that there are inconsistencies to be ironed out. Staff morale is high; on the questionnaires many of them wrote comments such as 'I feel privileged and proud to be part of the community.' Taking into account past improvements in standards and behaviour, the school has a very strong capacity to improve further.

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).

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.



12 March 2012

Dear Students

Inspection of Queen's Park Community School, Brent, NW6 7BQ

We much enjoyed the two days we spent in your school and thank you for being so welcoming. Yours is a good school and the sixth form is flourishing. You told us you feel safe and are happy and you seem to enjoy most lessons and participate enthusiastically in the many other activities on offer. We were impressed with how well you get on together, which generates a special, harmonious atmosphere.

It is excellent that A-level and GCSE results have gone up significantly since the previous inspection and that they are above average in many subjects. However, the predominantly good progress you make is not consistent between all subjects and groups so we have asked the school to sharpen targets for those of you who need to make rapid progress to keep up.

Your behaviour is good, despite some of you, and your parents and carers, being less positive about it in the questionnaires. When we spoke to you, most of you admitted that the major push to improve behaviour, starting 18 months ago, has made the school a calmer place. We agree, as practically all the lessons we saw proceeded without interruption – do try and keep up the good behaviour.

You are taught well and teaching has clearly improved. We saw some outstanding lessons but would like to see more. Two things will help to make this happen – more regular and helpful marking (which you must read and respond to) and more lessons when teachers plan work to meet your different abilities and levels.

Under your headteacher's effective leadership, you attend an inclusive school where you are well supported to do well. We hope those of you taking examinations this summer will do even better than last year and that all of you will have happy and successful futures.

Yours sincerely
Clare Gillies
Lead inspector

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