

Queen's Park High School

Queen's Park Road, Handbridge, Chester CH4 7AE

Inspection dates

21–22 June 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The outcomes for pupils, including learners in the sixth form, require improvement because pupils are not yet making good progress in mathematics and science and the standards achieved in these subjects are not as high as they should be.
- The school has experienced a period of staffing difficulties. The many changes of staff and unavoidable use of temporary teachers have resulted in some pupils having gaps in their knowledge. Teaching and learning therefore require improvement.
- Teachers' promotion of literacy skills is inconsistent.
- Not all teachers are confident in using the current assessment procedures, which are presently under review.
- Although attendance figures for all groups of pupils are improving, there are still some pupils who do not attend regularly enough.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are much improved in lessons but too many do not take pride in the work in their books. They are sometimes reluctant to respond to teachers' comments and marking guidance in line with the school's policy.

The school has the following strengths

- Since her appointment the headteacher has transformed the culture and aspirations of the school. She is well supported by senior and middle leaders. There is increasing evidence of the impact of good leadership and management in pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance.
- The leadership of teaching and learning is good. Professional development is a strong feature of the school.
- Achievement in English is good. Good teaching leads to good outcomes for pupils in subjects such as art, drama and modern foreign languages.
- Pupils' conduct around the school is mostly calm, orderly and respectful.
- Leaders' work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is effective.
- New leadership in the sixth form is bringing about rapid improvements and ensuring that the requirements of the 16–19 programmes of study are fully met.
- Governors are holding the school to account, asking challenging questions and finding out for themselves about the quality of teaching and the progress of all groups of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outcomes for all pupils, including learners in the sixth form, by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do so that more pupils make good progress, particularly in mathematics and science
 - teachers set high expectations for the quality of pupils' presentation of work
 - pupils respond to teachers' feedback, as required by the school's policy, in order to speed up the progress they make and secure stronger learning
 - new assessment procedures are fully embedded so that teachers use them accurately to measure pupils' progress
 - teachers consistently develop pupils' reading, writing and speaking skills
 - attendance improves in both the main school and sixth form.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher has been pivotal in bringing about rapid improvements since her appointment. She has injected much-needed rigour in the monitoring of teaching and learning and has the support of the governors, staff, pupils and many parents who credit her with restoring pride in the school and turning it round.
- Senior leaders understand their roles and responsibilities very well. Members of the leadership team convey clear messages about the 'no excuses' culture. As a result there is now a strong sense of unity, ambition and commitment among staff. Teachers made comments such as, 'school is a very good place at the moment; I'm glad I am here and part of a new team'.
- Senior leaders have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have ensured that all staff now share the same high expectations of pupils' behaviour and progress. As a result there is an improving trend in achievement and better conduct in class and around the school.
- Leaders have rightly set improving teaching as the highest priority. A comprehensive programme of training is in place and bespoke coaching is provided for those who require it. Leaders encourage innovation but ensure consistency. Appraisal is robust and effective and weak teaching has been dealt with successfully.
- Faculty reviews provide a new layer of evaluation. Leaders have already established a culture of continual improvement. New middle leaders have a sense of urgency and are working hard to improve the quality of work in their departments.
- Leaders recognise that the development of literacy is a priority. A new coordinator has been appointed and this will be a key focus in the coming year in order to improve outcomes in every subject.
- A house system has been put in place as part of the new behaviour system. Assistant heads of houses are non-teachers and monitor the attendance and behaviour of pupils and help to solve their problems. The house system also provides opportunities for teamwork and encourages healthy competition.
- The new SENCo (special educational needs coordinator) has already had a significant impact on policy and practice and the progress these pupils are making. Expectations are not lowered for these pupils. The SENCo is working with colleagues to support them in becoming more effective in teaching pupils with special educational needs. The school is also forging stronger links with feeder primary schools so that transition is seamless.
- Disadvantaged pupils are supported well so that the gap between their achievement and that of others in school, and others nationally, has lessened consistently, particularly in the last two years. This was an issue at the previous inspection and leaders have taken prompt and effective action to increase the support offered. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils has improved and many receive one-to-one support. Initiatives such as Saturday school are offered, where pupils can spend a morning with teachers improving their coursework or focusing on revision. The Year 7 catch-up funding is used to give lower-attaining pupils a good start in Year 7 with extra support for English and mathematics. All pupils make good progress in these small groups.
- New and effective leadership in the sixth form is already improving outcomes for post-16 learners and there are well-thought-through plans to improve attendance and work experience opportunities next year, as well as the continual drive to secure excellent teaching.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils praise the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities in sport, music and performing arts particularly. The curriculum includes pastoral enrichment days when pupils have the opportunity to explore wider issues such as keeping safe and healthy. The school encourages pupils to participate in national events such as World Holocaust Memorial day, St George's day, World Red Cross day, Commonwealth day and World Refugee day. Pupils learn about tolerance and understanding other faiths through work in religious studies as well as developing respect for different lifestyles. These aspects ensure that they are well prepared to be responsible British citizens.
- The local authority has provided strong support for the school as it strives to improve all aspects of its work. There is full confidence in the capacity of leaders to bring about the changes needed to make the school at least good. Much has been achieved in a short time but better teaching and leadership have yet to have a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are well informed, forward thinking and ambitious to see further improvements. After the previous inspection they commissioned their own review of their effectiveness, undertook extra training and appointed new members to the governing body. They have thus increased their skills in

challenging the school and are able to find out for themselves about the quality of teaching and learning and the progress that all groups of pupils are making. They hold leaders rigorously to account but also provide strong support and guidance. They are not willing to settle for mediocre teaching and achievement.

- Governors have a firm grasp of the school’s finances and ensure that funding for disadvantaged pupils is spent wisely, for the intended pupils, and that the impact is seen in better progress and achievement of these pupils. They oversee the staff appraisal system and ensure that the school’s pay and performance policy is rigorously enforced. Governors play a strong role in upholding the values and ethos of the school.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Safe recruitment practices are used well and policies and practices are regularly reviewed. The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils regard school as a safe place. Teachers are well trained and up to date in their understanding of good safeguarding practices.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is variable across the school. Some teachers are not setting high enough expectations for the quality and quantity of work that pupils produce. Untidy and unfinished work is not always challenged.
- Teaching across mathematics and science has been inconsistent for some time because of the use of temporary teachers. New leaders are tackling these weaker areas but there is more to be done to get pupils to the standards that should be expected of them.
- Sometimes there is a lack of clarity about what pupils are expected to learn and the pupils are not clear about what they have to do. There are few exemplars around the school displaying high-quality work so that pupils know what to aspire to.
- There are some missed opportunities to develop pupils’ literacy skills across subjects other than English. Pupils’ poor spelling is not always corrected and reading aloud with fluency and expression is not always encouraged.
- New assessment procedures are not fully embedded so that staff can use the system with total confidence to pinpoint exactly what progress pupils are making. However, recent assessments are accurate because staff have responded well to coaching and developed better systems of checking their marking, following the school policy, against that of others.
- There is some good and outstanding teaching in an increasing number of subjects, including English, modern foreign languages, art, drama and physical education. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed; for example, skilful questioning to enable pupils to make connections and extend knowledge is a feature in many subjects. In these subjects, and others, high expectations are evident.
- Teachers’ support for lower-attaining and vulnerable groups is strong. Teaching assistants contribute well to the learning of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities by asking extra questions and building confidence so that they are actively engaged in learning.
- The quality of marking across all subjects has improved since the previous inspection. Marking effectively addresses misconceptions, provides next steps in learning and accelerates progress when pupils respond as required. However, some pupils do not act on the guidance as expected by the school’s policy.
- Positive relationships and strong subject knowledge are features of many lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school’s work to promote pupils’ personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are smartly turned out and polite, often displaying good manners and mutual respect. The school is a calm, orderly environment and most pupils respond quickly to staff requests.
- Pupils feel safe and know who to turn to if they feel under any pressure or feel bullied. Pupils confirm that there is little bullying and if it occurs it is dealt with effectively by adults. Pupils are confident that they have many opportunities to learn how to keep themselves safe in different situations. Pupils know who to turn to if things go wrong and indicate that they are pleased with the way they are supported.
- Older pupils can speak confidently about their understanding of extremism and the risks associated with social media and the internet.

- The new house system is effective in promoting teamwork, building a sense of community and raising achievement. Pupils are enjoying the confidence that comes with being a successful learner.
- Two family support workers liaise with families where necessary and mentor children in care.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Behaviour requires improvement because positive attitudes to learning are not sufficiently developed across all year groups. Although the attitudes to learning of many pupils during lesson times have improved since the previous inspection, too many pupils take little pride in their written work. Across many subjects pupils' workbooks are untidy, work is unfinished, and some pupils have not responded to teachers' requests to complete work or correct errors and this means that they are not creating a reliable source of information to use for revision.
- A new behaviour policy is ensuring greater consistency in the way adults manage behaviour and leading to pupils recognising the rewards and benefits that good behaviour can bring. Exclusion rates are falling as pupils rise to the challenge of higher expectations. Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are tracked for speedy interventions if necessary.
- Attendance overall has risen in the past year but is not yet at national figures, either in the main school or sixth form. This is partly a legacy issue from when not enough was done to address habits of poor attendance. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs or disabilities is better than national figures for these groups. Attendance is now being tracked much more rigorously.
- When pupils are educated in alternative provision, procedures are rigorous to ensure that pupils are safe, attend regularly and make good progress.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- In 2015 outcomes for Year 11 were inadequate because pupils did not make the progress expected of them in either mathematics or science. Outcomes in many other subjects were below national averages. This is indicative of the legacy of poor progress made by pupils in that year group.
- Pupils' achievement in mathematics and science has not been as good as it should be because teaching has been less strong in these subjects. Many staff changes and the need for temporary teachers have left gaps in pupils' knowledge so that progress has been slow.
- Currently rates of progress in mathematics and science are improving but too few make the rapid progress necessary to reach the higher grades. Staff are working hard to plug the gaps in pupils' knowledge and develop deeper understanding. Staffing has been stabilised, with more specialist teachers joining the school.
- Outcomes for current pupils in Year 11 show a marked improvement across a range of subjects.
- Pupils make good progress in English, art, drama and modern foreign languages. The proportion of pupils making good progress in English now exceeds the national figure.
- Evidence from checking in pupils' books shows stronger progress in Year 10 and in key stage 3 for all ability levels across many subjects.
- The most able pupils in Year 11 achieved well in 2015 and this has continued in the current year. The most able pupils in Year 9 are exceeding the challenging targets set for them and are on track to do even better in Years 10 and 11. This is because some teachers are providing much greater challenge and expecting more from their pupils.
- Middle ability pupils underperformed last year and so their progress has been a whole-school focus in the current year. All staff have responded to this emphasis and the improvement in the progress of these pupils is a key reason why overall standards are higher this year.
- The new SENCo has established a tracking system for pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities to make sure that they are making at least expected progress from their starting points. This is because they are well supported in and out of the classroom. Teaching assistants are very skilled and the new SENCo has made the achievement of these pupils as important as their care and nurture.
- The very small numbers of pupils who attend alternative provision make good progress and are on track to reach their targets. This is because courses are well chosen and appropriate to pupils' needs and interests.
- Careers professionals and teachers guide pupils to make appropriate choices well. All pupils in the last two years have progressed on to well-chosen courses which reflect their aptitudes and aspirations.

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- Sixth form learners' attendance is below average and also below that of the rest of the school. This has a considerable impact on the outcomes for these learners, even though teaching is improving in the sixth form. Recent strategies to improve attendance are beginning to make a difference.
- Until recently work experience has been optional but the school has now made this a compulsory element of learning so that all learners will have the opportunity to experience the world of work during their time in the sixth form.
- The number of learners who continued from Year 12 into Year 13 in 2015 was below the national average. The school is addressing this by providing better, more specific advice before learners embark on their courses. The school now starts careers advice about post-16 options as early as Year 8 so that pupils develop a culture of future planning and making better-informed choices.
- Outcomes at AS level and A level were broadly in line with national outcomes in 2015 and the interim minimum standards were met. The pass rate at A level was 100% but some learners did not make as much progress as they should, especially in academic subjects.
- The school has broadened the range of subjects available and added more level 2 courses. New pathways are offered so that learners can choose academic or vocational options which better suit their needs and requirements and which will lead to successful qualifications.
- All learners who have yet to achieve grade C in either English or mathematics at GCSE continue to study and resit these subjects. The pass rate for these resits is above the national average.
- Learners are very positive about the sixth form. They feel the range of choices is good; the support they receive is helpful and they have confidence that they will reach their targets. They praise the quality of careers advice and feel very well informed about choices before they entered the sixth form and what options are available to them when they leave.
- The sixth form is consistently successful in ensuring that all learners go on to further education, training or employment.
- Sixth form learners have opportunities for leadership and the chance to develop skills for life through the 'Development of the Individual' programme.
- The new head of sixth form is bringing greater rigour to the way that learners' progress is checked and support is provided. More frequent and accurate assessment is ensuring that learners and staff can be confident in predicting outcomes. The head of sixth form is ambitious to bring about rapid improvement and the impact of this is seen already in stronger outcomes predicted for this year and the improved quality of teaching.

School details

Unique reference number	111397
Local authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	10012181

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	520
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	126
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Patrick Hill
Headteacher	Lyndsay Watterson
Telephone number	01244 981 500
Website	www.qphs.cheshire.sch.uk
Email address	queensparkadmin@cheshire.gov.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 May 2014

Information about this school

- Queen’s Park High School is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. The school has a sixth form.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is just above average. The pupil premium is funding to help overcome disadvantage and is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The very great majority of pupils are from White British families. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very low.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities is above average.
- The school occasionally uses other providers for a very small number of pupils. Currently the school is using the Utopia Project for alternative provision.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- In 2015 the school did not meet the government’s current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress.
- A new headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection and many staff are new to the school since September 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils learning in most subjects in Years 7 to 10 and Year 12. Pupils in Year 11 and learners in Year 13 were on study leave because of their GCSE and A level examinations. Four of these observations were carried out jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work in many subjects across the school, either in lessons or as a separate activity.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, curriculum leaders, heads of houses and other members of staff and groups of pupils from Years 7 to 10 and Year 12. The lead inspector met governors, including the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, and spoke on the telephone with the school's improvement partner.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation including the school's self-evaluation and action plans, information about pupils' attainment and progress, records relating to pupils' behaviour and attendance, the school's safeguarding and other policies and records of checks on the quality of teaching and learning.
- They observed pupils' behaviour at break and lunchtimes and attended several tutor sessions.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents from the 45 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire.
- The views of staff were gained from the 48 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire and from discussions with individual teachers.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lindy Griffiths	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Hollister	Ofsted Inspector

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