

# Inspection of Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College

Inspection dates:

8 to 11 October 2024

**Overall effectiveness****Outstanding**

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The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Education programmes for young people	<b>Outstanding</b>
Provision for learners with high needs	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

**Information about this provider**

Queen Elizabeth Sixth Form College is a 16 to 19 academy based on one campus in Darlington. The college converted to an academy in April 2024, joining Northern Arch Learning Partnership.

At the time of the inspection, there were 1,924 students on education programmes for young people. Just under half of students study three A-level subjects. Most of the remaining students follow a mixed programme, combining A-level qualifications and applied general qualifications. Just under a tenth of students follow a full applied general programme and a small number of students are enrolled on the foundation diploma in art. Twelve students have education, health and care plans for which the college receives high-needs funding.

## **What is it like to be a learner with this provider?**

Leaders and staff have very high expectations for students' academic progress and for the behaviours and attitudes that students demonstrate. They have created a very positive and respectful culture across the college. Students are studious, inquisitive and keen to learn. They display very positive attitudes to their learning and life in the college's inclusive community. Students value and speak enthusiastically about the extensive knowledge and skills that they are developing and how these will help them achieve their future ambitions.

Through the highly effective support and challenge that they provide, staff improve students' confidence and resilience significantly. Students learn very early that it is acceptable, and indeed can be beneficial, to make mistakes so that with the support of their teachers, they can learn from these and improve.

Students gain a high level of knowledge and understanding about life in modern Britain through the content of the tutorial programme and the way that teachers integrate relevant topics skilfully into the curriculum. Students find information about healthy relationships, consent, personal safety, physical and mental health and well-being very helpful and show maturity when talking about these issues with peers. Students are alert to local risks to their safety such as county lines and far-right extremism. They can confidently explain the signs of radicalisation. For example, they identify that changes in a friend's social circle could be an indication of risk.

Students feel very safe at the college. They know how to report any concerns, should any arise. They understand that leaders, managers and staff at all levels have a zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and discrimination and that any instances are dealt with swiftly.

## **What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?**

Leaders and governors express, and translate to staff, a clear and ambitious vision that the college will provide high-quality, transformational education. They ensure that the college's curriculum is accessible to students from all social backgrounds, and with varying levels of prior attainment, high needs or learning difficulties and/or disabilities. As a result, the college provides excellent opportunities to enable students to overcome barriers posed by educational, health and social disadvantage.

Leaders have developed a broad and highly inclusive curriculum which allows students to build a study programme from a blend of academic and applied general qualifications matched very well to their interests and career aspirations. Leaders, managers and teachers are committed to developing students' passion for learning. They plan and teach curriculums across a wide range of subjects that enable students, including those who have high needs or other learning support needs, to make significant progress in gaining new knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Teachers have expert knowledge about the subjects that they teach. They inspire students with their passion for their subjects. Leaders and managers support teachers to maintain high levels of professional and vocational currency through, for example, giving them time to work as examiners for awarding bodies and to maintain close links with employers and universities.

Teachers plan and sequence the curriculum logically and use a range of highly effective teaching strategies to support students to gain and master subject-specific knowledge and skills. They skilfully break down complex content into smaller, manageable elements of learning. They set focused tasks that challenge students to apply previously acquired knowledge in different contexts. For example, psychology teachers break down content about psychological approaches and research methods into manageable steps which students critique and apply effectively to practices such as drug therapies. Students studying sports and leisure learn about the fundamentals of coaching, including assessing risk, coaching drills and cooldown exercises before consolidating this knowledge when devising, implementing and reviewing coaching plans.

Teachers use assessment skilfully to check what students know and can do and ensure that misconceptions and mistakes are addressed swiftly. They provide students with very precise and helpful feedback in lessons and on their written work. Teachers use the outcomes of assessments very effectively to evaluate the impact of their chosen teaching strategies and use this to make well-informed changes where necessary.

Teachers work very effectively with the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator and team of key workers to ensure that students who have high needs or additional learning needs receive effective support to study alongside their peers. For example, specialist desks and chairs enable students with restricted mobility to participate fully in chemistry experiments. Students with additional support needs, including those who have high needs, achieve at least as well as their peers and progress to their planned next steps, including to study degrees at university.

Teachers very successfully plan and implement activities to enable students to refine, develop and apply their English and mathematics skills. In English literature, teachers use pre-populated templates and writing frames early in the course which they then gradually remove as students' analytic writing skills improve over time. In travel and tourism, teachers set challenging tasks that require students to calculate complex journey times that involve multiple connections in different time zones.

Leaders have successfully implemented a strategy to embed academic literacy into the curriculum across subjects, recognising this as a key enabler of student success. Teachers prioritise oracy in learning activities to develop students' use of technical vocabulary. Teachers use command words consistently to support students to provide answers that are clear and focused, coaching them to use accurate terminology and more sophisticated language. As a result, students make marked improvements to their listening and speaking skills, which prepares them well for the demands of higher-level study.

Leaders provide students with a range of relevant and meaningful opportunities to work with employers and gain experience of work. Students undertake work experience placements and work with employers on live projects to understand the realities of the workplace and how subjects in their study programme relate to these. Leaders and staff ensure that these opportunities are woven through the curriculum and are responsive to the career intentions of students.

As a result of the very well-planned and taught curriculum that they experience, students produce work of a very high standard that reflects the knowledge and skills they have developed. For example, psychology students are more able to analyse and evaluate theoretical concepts. Students in English literature and history develop a coherent writing style and are sophisticated in their expression.

Leaders, managers and staff ensure that students receive high-quality advice and guidance about their next steps. Depending on whether they plan to progress to university, apprenticeships or work, conversations with an higher education or jobs coach help students to prepare. For example, jobs coaches help students to write CVs, set up job alerts and take part in mock job interviews.

Students, including those with high needs, make very good progress from their starting points and achieve well, with a significant proportion achieving high grades. Almost all students progress to positive destinations, including universities, apprenticeships or work.

Leaders, managers and teachers have been successful in bringing about improvements in students' attendance on the few courses where they identified it needed to improve. They reinforce with students the importance of high attendance and how this links directly to their chances of success. Any instances of absence are followed up on immediately with students and their parents or carers.

Students are taught very effectively about how to stay safe while using the internet. They can describe in detail very frequent input by staff about online safety, covering sexual harassment, inappropriate image sharing, how to protect themselves from being scammed and the risks of inappropriate use of social media.

Students have a rich range of opportunities to engage with the wider community, including supporting local charities. Students in the knitting club knit squares which are made into blankets and sent to a partner village in Uganda.

Staff promote very well the importance of good mental and physical health. They help students to understand how poor mental health can impact their personal well-being. Staff have worked effectively to increase the number of sports teams that students can participate in, ensuring that these opportunities are inclusive. They use disadvantaged student funding to provide students who need it with kit and equipment.

Leaders provide teachers with highly effective staff development and training activities. They have established communities of learning where teachers carry out action research to help them improve their teaching practice. Staff maintain up-to-date subject knowledge and, where relevant, industry knowledge.

Leaders take very effective action to ensure that the quality of education is of a high standard and leads to positive outcomes for students. A cycle of rigorous quality improvement engenders a culture of high expectations across the college. The monitoring and support work of quality leads and the training and support that learning leaders provide for teachers create an effective culture of learning and reflective practice that staff value highly.

Leaders and governors have an incisive understanding of the college's many strengths. They also accurately identify the few aspects of the college's provision that they want to improve and closely monitor the impact of actions to address these. Leaders and governors are closely monitoring the impact of their actions to improve retention and attendance on the very few courses where improvement is needed.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Provider details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	150514
<b>Address</b>	Vane Terrace Darlington County Durham DL3 7AU
<b>Contact number</b>	01325 461315
<b>Website</b>	<a href="https://qeliz.nalp.org.uk/">https://qeliz.nalp.org.uk/</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Laurence Job
<b>Provider type</b>	16 to 19 academy
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	None

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal, curriculum, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising students' work, seeking the views of students, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

## Inspection team

Malcolm Fraser, lead inspector	His Majesty's Inspector
Alison Dennis	His Majesty's Inspector
Rose Woollard	Ofsted Inspector
Joanne Stork	His Majesty's Inspector
Fionnuala Swann	Ofsted Inspector

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