

# Your guide

**Queen  
Alexandra  
College**  
Birmingham

[www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)



**A national  
college for people  
with disabilities**



# Welcome to our College...

**OFSTED REPORT** / "Students make good progress from their starting points in managing their anxieties, maximising their abilities, cooperating with fellow students and communicating by speech, signing or eye-pointing."



# Queen Alexandra College

**Queen Alexandra College (QAC)** is a national residential College that supports a diverse range of student abilities and needs based in Birmingham.

**We welcome students** who come to our College from all over the country – as well as many who are local to us.

The College has been at its current location since 1903. Our original purpose was to provide education for young people who were blind or visually impaired.

Today, in addition to supporting people who have a visual impairment, we offer support and guidance for students on the Autistic Spectrum (including individuals with Asperger's syndrome),

those with moderate to severe learning difficulties, students with physical and other disabilities.

Ultimately, we have a great mix of students which adds to the wonderful atmosphere here in College. There are over 300 students studying here at **QAC** but you will be pleased to know that class sizes are small and support levels are high.



To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

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**PARENTAL SURVEY** / "Staff and Student interaction is excellent. Encouraging environment with plenty of opportunities for the student to grow and learn."



# It's all about you...

**We offer an innovative, holistic approach to learning and support.** Developing the right learning programme for you is vital to ensure you achieve your long term goals; programmes are personalised and flexible.

**At QAC our aim is that your learning** is planned around your individual needs, interests and ambitions.

The **QAC** curriculum intends to maximise adult life, independence and work opportunities for all students. Residential learning, Preparation for Life, Employment Pathways, LEAP and Vocational programmes provide opportunities to progress towards your own goals, at a pace that suits you and with exactly the level of support that you need.

Some of the opportunities available to you will include learning with others, learning through social and leisure activities and through work experience.

As well as your main programme, your personal learning experience will be

developed with you and will include some of the following:

- ▶ Functional Skills (literacy, numeracy, communication and ICT) and GCSEs in English and Maths
- ▶ Access to Support Services (psychological and behavioural)
- ▶ Physiotherapy
- ▶ Rehabilitation and Travel Training
- ▶ Speech and Language Therapy
- ▶ Healthcare Support
- ▶ Occupational Therapy and Sensory Support
- ▶ Dyslexia Support
- ▶ Assistive Technology / VI Support
- ▶ Braille Tuition
- ▶ Personal and Sexual Health Education (PSHE)

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

**OFSTED REPORT** / "Students' transitions into and out of college are well managed and sensitively handled by staff."



#### **PARENTAL SURVEY /**

"My daughter has gained confidence and has made some new friends. Staff are amazing, very approachable and helpful. My daughter is well supported."

# Achieve your long term goals

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**Call us on:** 0121 428 5041 to book your visit.



**PARENTAL SURVEY** / "QAC has given my son confidence, he's made friends which he struggled with and he's also doing a course that he enjoys, while giving him some independence."

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## A friendly and safe environment

**Call us on:** 0121 428 5041 to book your visit.

# Our college

**We have a hugely diverse** student population here at **QAC**. Everyone who studies here is unique and as such has their own abilities and needs.

**This makes for a really vibrant environment,** where students feel valued and empowered.

The College has many specialists on site who are able to support students, including Speech and Language Therapists, Healthcare Professionals, Counsellors, Mentors and a Personal and Sexual Health Education (PSHE) Lead.

Our campus is large and safe but handy for the shops in Harborne and buses into the city.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

Harborne used to be a separate village near to Birmingham; local people still call it 'The Village'. There are a variety of shops, cafés, banks and a library in the centre, all just five or ten minutes walk from the College.

### **Pinewood Centre**

Our Supported Internship base and where specific Employment Pathways programmes are delivered, Pinewood Centre is a satellite site located in nearby Woodgate Valley. It provides a high quality and exciting stepping stone into the world of work; more business-like than educational in its feel.

### **Umberslade Nurseries**

Located in Selly Oak, Umberslade Nurseries is a rural idyll in an urban setting comprising of a small retail outlet, tea room and various horticulture facilities that are utilised by College students.

### **Fitness Centre**

Serving **QAC** students, the Fitness Centre has been designed to meet the needs

of a diverse user base and has an extensive range of exercise equipment in a friendly and relaxed environment. It also serves as **QAC's** centre for physiotherapy delivery, incorporating specialist assessment areas and rehabilitation and therapy services.

### **What Students Like**

- ▶ The friendly and safe environment
- ▶ Being treated like an adult
- ▶ Opportunities to make new friends
- ▶ The specialist support they receive
- ▶ Gaining more self-confidence
- ▶ The approachable nature of staff

### **OFSTED REPORT /**

"The curriculum prepares students well for adulthood, independence and employment."



# Personalised learning programmes

Here at QAC we know how important it is that you find a programme that is right for you and that can help you to maximise your potential.

**We take time to work with you and your family** so that we can ensure that you find a programme that is perfect for you.

Every student at QAC will have a Personal Tutor who will encourage and support you throughout your time at College.

For those students who require additional support with communication, alternative methods such as Braille, Makaton, Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) or symbols are used. QAC's aim is to provide a total communication environment.

**Our Curriculum** is designed to maximise life chances, develop independence and work skills. You will find a full list of our programmes on our website at [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

Subject areas include Art & Design, Creative Media Production, Health & Social Care, Horticulture, Hospitality, Information Technology, Motor Vehicle Studies, Performing Arts, Retail and Customer

Service, Sport and Trades. Employment skills are embedded across all areas of study.

Our Preparation for Life (PFL) programme is very popular and provides you with an opportunity to develop the skills that you would need to participate within your community and, where possible, the workplace. This programme is designed for students who are working at Pre-Entry to Entry level and offers a great deal of variety. It will enable you to develop a range of practical and social skills in addition to increasing your confidence and self-esteem.

The LEAP programme (Learning, Employment and Progression) is a stepping stone for students from PFL into a more work focused environment. A supported internship study programme could also be followed which involves spending the majority of time with an employer in a real job role.

If you need a phased transition back into education following previous difficult experiences, our **Access to College** programme provides bespoke specialist support initially away from campus.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)



**The Powerchair Football Academy,** working in partnership with The Albion Foundation, is the first collaborative 'study programme' of its kind in the whole country. Ideal for students aspiring to be sports coaches or play for their county or the national team.



### OFSTED REPORT /

"The college meets the complex and diverse needs of its students well, providing programmes from pre-entry level to level 3."

# Useful skills for the future

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**Call us on:** 0121 428 5041 to book your visit.

**OFSTED REPORT /**

"All students make good progress in developing their communication skills."

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# Have your voice heard

**Call us on:** 0121 428 5041 to book your visit.





# Your voice

**We are always interested to hear your thoughts** on how we are doing and we like to get students involved in all aspects of College life.

**You will have the opportunity to be involved** in **QAC's** Student Council and even national groups such as Natspec Student Voice Parliament or the National Union of Students.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

**S**tudents are invited to attend a range of meetings with staff and Governors throughout the year. We appoint Student Ambassadors each year to assist us when we are talking to potential students and to help visitors learn more about **QAC**. We also appoint Student Mentors who can support students new to the College.

If you need to talk to someone about personal issues, our confidential counselling service is available in private surroundings and you will be given the opportunity to discuss issues which are personal to you with a College counsellor.

Counsellors practise in accordance with the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy ethical practice. They aim to help you get the best out of your time at **QAC** and to prepare for the future. All **QAC** students have free confidential access to this service, based on need.

Student Support Officers provide mentoring in small groups and in structured one to one sessions to help your social and emotional skills development by following Jigsaw, our Emotional Literacy programme. We also provide support through our sensory support service. Staff will help with your day to day College life and interaction with others.

Our Personal and Sexual Health Education (PSHE) Lead provides an ongoing sex and relationships programme to all students, this includes all aspects of sexuality, sexual health and managing relationship issues. The PSHE Lead will also work with you if you need extra support, or just want to come and discuss matters in private. Peer support groups are also offered around a variety of issues such as men's group, LGBTQ, women's group and others.





# Developing independence

**QAC offers Rehabilitation and Travel Training**  
to develop your independent travel skills.

**This training might be really useful for you** whether you have a visual impairment or other disability and will enable you to travel with greater confidence.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to  
[www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

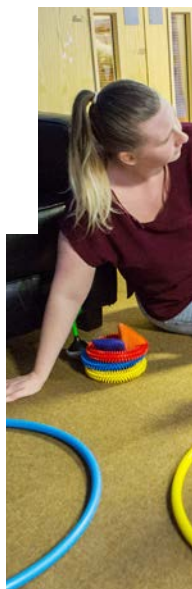
Your training may begin using our own onsite travel training area **'Independence Street'**. The Team can offer you vital travel training skills including bus and rail travel, road safety, money management and communication skills to increase your confidence and independence. The rehabilitation team will also provide support in your daily living skills to improve your confidence and knowledge.

**'i-Spot'** is a dedicated sensory provision equipped with resources to deliver sensory related therapies as guided by our Occupational Therapist.

The goal of sensory related therapy is to explore your ability to process sensory information and how this is managed in different environments.

The sensory room is well equipped with resources to support and effectively deliver a range of sensory activities. Equipment includes Soundbeam, fibre optic lighting, UV lighting as well as sensory and movement therapy items.

**PARENTAL SURVEY /**  
"Staff are approachable and friendly."



# The residential experience

**If you are thinking of studying at QAC** you may wish to consider joining us as a residential student.

## **This is an excellent way to develop your independent living and social skills.**

For many it's the first time they have ever been away from their families and it provides an excellent opportunity to experience what it is like to transition into adulthood. The ability to form relationships, organise social events, manage money, navigate travel routes, learn how to stay safe, prepare and cook meals and perform household chores are just some of the skills that our residential students develop in the 24-hour curriculum.

Your residential accommodation at **QAC** will match your needs, personality and your level of independence. As your independence and confidence grows you may move to new supported accommodation to help you progress.

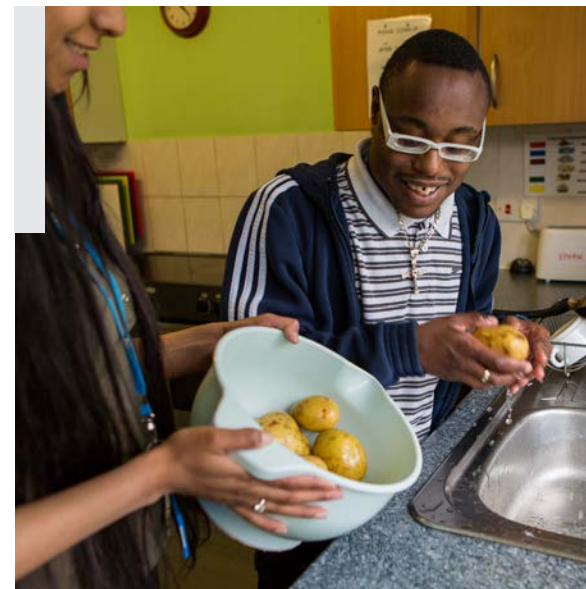
You will be supported towards your key individual targets by experienced residential teams which include sleep-in and waking night staff.

There are lots of activities that take place during evenings and weekends including quiz nights, bingo, sport clubs and movie nights to name but a few. We also visit theme parks, go shopping, visit local cinemas as well as going on weekend trips away.

► **If you think that residential provision might be right for you** then you can speak to us about this in more detail when you are making your application.

We also offer a specialist respite service and aim to develop and grow our capacity to increase the number of respite beds. Please ask for more information.

**PARENTAL SURVEY /** "The residential staff understand my son very well, he has had a difficult year and residential staff have been amazing in how they have supported him."





**PARENTAL SURVEY** / "My son is enjoying his independence at College. He really enjoys being able to make his own choices and his confidence is improving all the time."

# Enjoying your free time

**Call us on:** 0121 428 5041 to book your visit.



# Having fun

**QAC staff will work with you** to co-ordinate a choice of sports, music and leisure activities. These will take place not only at **QAC** and in Birmingham but also throughout the UK.

**Enjoying your free time** is an important part of being at **QAC**.

**A**s well as using our indoor Sports Hall and Fitness Centre you might choose to use our popular Student Centre with its table football, pool table, air hockey, Sky TV and games consoles.

There is a good range of leisure activities in the evening and at weekends. These include swimming, ten pin bowling, cinema, ice skating, concerts, Premiership and Championship football, five-a-side football, athletics training, climbing, music club, karaoke, goalball, residential visits, outward bound expeditions, athletics competitions and pool tournaments.

Further afield, **QAC** students have sailed from Salcombe in Devon, conquered the peaks of Snowdonia and visited all the major theme parks. Annual trips to Conistone in the Lake District and Duke of Edinburgh expeditions help students expand their horizons. There are many more local and regional trips built into educational programmes.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to [www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)

## **PARENTAL SURVEY /**

**"QAC** offers a wide range of activities that my daughter enjoys and she is encouraged to become more independent regardless of her disabilities."



# Your life after QAC

**Whatever your ambitions in life**  
**QAC** staff will support and guide you  
in the right direction when the time  
comes to leave College.

**Whatever your destination** after **QAC**  
we will help you to make  
sure that the time you  
have spent with us at  
**QAC** has prepared you  
for adulthood and  
has a positive impact  
on your future life.

To see our full Student  
Curriculum go to  
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**Y**our study programme, the work experience you have completed and your new confidence and independence will mean that you have more choices for your future than when you arrived at **QAC**.

During your time at **QAC** you will receive support from many staff, including the Transitions Team, to help you explore your future options. Together they will help you to identify professionals and organisations that can assist you with the progression from College into the next phase of adult life.

Regular Annual Reviews will be held with you, your family, College staff and other relevant professionals. During a review, future options will be discussed such as further education, care, health, accommodation, employment and training opportunities.

Following the review a person-centred plan will be created. You might choose to move on to a general further education college or university and gain further qualifications. We will help you look at your choices and find out whether you have the right qualifications to apply.

Your Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan will be updated to reflect your needs. You might seek our help in finding a job, day care opportunities or supported accommodation in Birmingham or near to your home.

**QAC** has other opportunities for you to explore too, such as our Independence Plus programme or our growing community service offer.

## **Employer Survey**

- ▶ "The student has fully immersed herself in the working world, taken all tasks in her stride and completed everything given to her to a high standard. It has been rewarding watching her confidence grow."
- ▶ "Students who come here are well matched and have an interest in learning about sales and e-sales."

**OFSTED REPORT** / "Students progress well after leaving the college, and many achieve the personal, social, employment and educational destinations they have identified as goals."





**OFSTED REPORT** / "Work experience arrangements are very good. Most students attend a wide range of placements, carefully matched to their individual needs and abilities."

# Useful skills for the future

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**As we say goodbye to our leavers at the end of each academic year** parents and families are invited to a special event to celebrate the successes of students.





# We welcome your support

**PARENTAL SURVEY** / "We like the commitment that the college has to all its students and the help and support that is given by all the staff."



**We are always planning fundraising activities** and would welcome your support.

**T**he funds we receive from the government do not fully cover the costs of providing excellent staff, buildings and resources for our students. **For this, the College relies upon charitable support.**

We receive **gifts in kind** and support from volunteers and are pleased to discuss ideas from supporters for fundraising events.

**For more information**  
please call 0121 428 5064  
or email  
[fundraising@qac.ac.uk](mailto:fundraising@qac.ac.uk)

**QAC** is a registered charity.

# Community Services/ Independence Plus

Independence<sup>+</sup>  
PLUS

## Community Services

Over the next few years, we are proactively developing our diverse range of community based services for people with learning difficulties, disabilities and high needs.

Community services in the near future will include a specialist regional day service provision in the creative arts, drama, music and independence for people with high needs.

It will also offer a specialist bespoke consultancy, assessment and training service with expertise in visual

impairment, autism and associated mental health wellbeing.

Through collaboration and partnership, **QAC** aim to benefit young people and adults in the local and regional community as well as upskilling local employers, professionals and businesses in supporting people with disabilities and learning difficulties.

**For more information regarding any of our community services**

please call 0121 428 5050 or email [jmorel@qac.ac.uk](mailto:jmorel@qac.ac.uk)

## Independence Plus - Supported Living options

Independence Plus was developed because we identified a need to sustain the independence that people were developing while at **QAC**.

You may have gained really useful living skills during your time at College and so it might make sense for you to continue to develop this independence rather than return to the family home.

Clients on this programme still need support and the aim is to deliver a service that provides you with the means to live independently/semi independently into the future. Many clients are in education, voluntary work or paid employment not linked to **QAC** directly.

Funding is usually provided through a Direct Payment Personal Budget in conjunction with housing benefit for accommodation. This service is available for people aged 18-30 years. We provide support to transition on into life-long living support options with other providers.

To see our full Student Curriculum go to  
[www.qac.ac.uk](http://www.qac.ac.uk)



# QAC Enterprises



## All Formats Transcription Services

All Formats provide a specialist service transcribing documents into a number of alternative formats suitable for people with a visual impairment. All Formats is a proud member of UKAAF – UK Association for Accessible Formats.



## Advantage Graphite Canes

QAC is the UK distributor of Revolution Carbon Fibre Canes – used and acclaimed worldwide. These canes are lighter in weight and more durable than traditional aluminium canes. We are also able to supply coloured canes upon request.



## QAC Sight Village

QAC Sight Village exhibitions are premier UK events showcasing technology, support and services for people who are blind or visually impaired and those experiencing age related sight loss.

**For more information** regarding any of our enterprises please visit [www.qac.ac.uk/enterprises](http://www.qac.ac.uk/enterprises) or call 0121 428 5041.





## QAC runs several successful businesses.



### Autism Central

Autism Central is a FREE exhibition of products and services for individuals with autism, families, carers and professionals. There is an extensive programme of workshops and seminars throughout the day.

### Conference & Training Facilities *available for hire*

#### Facilities for Hire

We have a varied range of excellent facilities available for hire which are ideal for conferences, training, meetings and corporate 'away days'.

Our state-of-the-art Sports Hall is also available for hire evenings, weekends and out of term time.



**PARENTAL SURVEY** / "Staff are warm, friendly and accommodating and have always met our child's needs and addressed our concerns."



## MISSION STATEMENT

**QAC** creates challenging learning opportunities for people with visual impairment and/or other disabilities to realise their potential to work and to live independently.

**Please note:** QAC undertakes to provide the educational and support services detailed within this prospectus as far as reasonably practicable. It does not however, guarantee the provision of such services since circumstances beyond the control of the College may affect its ability to do so. The information given was correct at the time of going to press but may suffer amendment from time to time without prior notice, both in relation to individual courses and the facilities and services available from or provided by the College. A minimum enrolment total is required for the opening of any class. The College reserves the right to cancel/change a class, course or programme if there is a significant reduction in attendance or where the minimum enrolment total is not achieved or due to changes beyond our control.





# Our values and intent

**Creating challenging learning opportunities** for people with visual impairment and/or other disabilities to realise their potential.

## Our core values & vision

**QAC** makes a positive difference to the lives and learning of people with disabilities and learning difficulties, having high expectations of staff and students and being responsive, innovative and collaborative.

**We incorporate the following values into our daily College life and behaviour:**

- ▶ Inclusion
- ▶ Excellence
- ▶ Enabling
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Integrity
- ▶ Respect

### **Safeguarding & Prevent at QAC**

We take seriously our responsibilities for safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults in our care. We have designated safeguarding leads and robust practices in place to ensure student safety. We liaise with allied professionals to ensure delivery of support to students

and families when the need arises. We can send you a copy of our Safeguarding Policy on request.

### **Investors in Diversity**

In July 2017 **QAC** successfully demonstrated its ongoing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The College was re-accredited for its Investors in Diversity Stage 2 Award, a nationally recognised award. It hopes to soon achieve Leaders in Diversity Accreditation.

### **Investors in People**

The College is proud to have achieved the Investors in People Standard. The award represents **QAC's** good management practice with a high emphasis on engagement, people management and development.

### **A Mindful Employer**

**QAC** is committed to promoting an inclusive environment for staff and stakeholders. **QAC** is positive about Mental Health and shows this support by signing up to the MINDFUL EMPLOYER and AoC Mental Health and Wellbeing Charters.

**EDI CHARTER** / All members of staff, volunteers and students of **QAC** are entitled to equality of rights and opportunities and have the same responsibility to respect and treat people with dignity regardless of their differences.



# Contact Us

If you need this guide in an alternative format  
(Braille, large print or audio):  
Please call: 0121 428 5041 or email: [info@qac.ac.uk](mailto:info@qac.ac.uk)

**YOU ARE INVITED** to visit **QAC**  
to discover for yourself the friendly atmosphere  
and great resources. You can meet students  
and staff and get answers to any questions  
before making an application.

**Call us on:** 0121 428 5041  
to book your visit.

## Queen Alexandra College

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