

Charnwood College (Upper)

Thorpe Hill, Loughborough, LE11 4SQ

Inspection dates

15–16 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement in mathematics is weak. Standards remain below average and rates of progress too slow. There are currently too many gaps in students' understanding to enable them to move their learning forward.
- Teachers in mathematics are not identifying or addressing these gaps quickly enough. The tasks that are set are not sufficiently interesting or challenging to fully engage students.
- The most-able students are not challenged well enough.
- A minority of teachers do not sufficiently assess students' understanding during lessons to be able to identify who needs extra support and who is ready to move on to a new challenge.
- The sixth form requires improvement. Subject performance varies too much. The quality of feedback students receive about their work is not good enough to ensure they know how to improve.

The school has the following strengths

- The Principal, well-supported by his senior team and by the governing body, has been rigorous in the way he has addressed the issues raised by the previous inspection, particularly in establishing his high expectations for the quality of teaching.
- Leaders have established rigorous processes for promoting high-quality teaching. Subject leaders take a leading role and hold teachers closely to account for the progress their students make. As a result, teaching in most subjects is now improving.
- Students are now making outstanding progress in English, where teaching is consistently strong.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs make good progress. Systems to ensure their support are a model of good practice.
- Students behave well. They are enthusiastic about their learning and are keen to do well.
- Students are polite and courteous to adults and get on well together. The new behaviour system is valued by students and staff and has led to rapid improvements.
- The college keeps students safe and secure. Students say that they are well looked after, that bullying is rare and that adults support them well. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning across all year groups and most subjects, three of which were seen together with one of the college’s senior leaders. They also made a number of further short visits to lessons. Students’ mathematics books were examined.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body and staff. A telephone conversation took place with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors observed the college’s work and looked at: policies, the college’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for development, minutes of meetings of the governing body, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents and samples of students’ work.
- The college’s own survey of the views of parents and carers were taken into account. Few responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took the 33 responses to the staff questionnaire into account.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
John Collins	Additional Inspector
Non Davies	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The college is below the average size of secondary schools nationally.
- The college operates as an 11–18 school with Charnwood College (High), sharing the same leadership, governance, teaching staff and premises. The two schools are planning to amalgamate formally.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is above average, with the largest group being of Indian heritage. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average at 5%, as is the proportion supported at school action (9%).
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is average at 26%.
- Twenty-eight students follow part-time off-site alternative courses provided by: Twenty Twenty, Melton Learning Hub, Soar Valley music centre, Mere Lane stables, Mountfield Lodge Youth Centre, Sub Sea Ventures, High Impact Intervention, Loughborough College, Aim vocational centre and a variety of sports providers.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Over the past few years there have been considerable changes to staffing in mathematics. A new subject leader for mathematics began in September 2013 following a period where there was no leader of this department. Other staff have also been recently appointed to this department.
- A basketball course intended for elite players is provided in the sixth form. This is an Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE), attracting students nationwide and from abroad, provided in partnership with the Leicester Riders.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that all teaching is consistently at least good by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan tasks that fully stretch the most-able students to ensure they reach their potential
 - frequently check that students are not finding tasks too easy or too difficult, and move them on to a new challenge as soon as they show understanding.
- Raise standards in mathematics by ensuring that any gaps in students' understanding are quickly identified and addressed and that tasks set are sufficiently interesting or challenging to fully engage them.
- Tackle the weaker performance in some sixth form subjects by ensuring teachers provide consistently good quality feedback to students so that they all have a good understanding of what they need to do to improve.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The Principal, with quiet determination, has been rigorous in driving improvements, strengthening his senior team and systematically addressing the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. Together with the governing body, they communicate their high expectations for the college, which are shared by staff, who show a determination to continue to improve their practice.
- Processes to improve the quality of teaching are good. Checks are frequent, regular and rigorous. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved strongly since the previous inspection and there is now no inadequate teaching.
- Opportunities for professional development are very well planned and matched to the individual needs of staff, including using the expertise of specialist teaching assistants to deliver training for staff on how best to manage different disabilities and special educational needs. Groups of staff, such as the 'Drive' group, further promote different aspects of teaching and staff are encouraged to coach and support each other by the sharing of good practice.
- Subject leaders feel increasingly empowered in improving teaching. They now challenge underperformance and hold teachers to account for the progress made by their students. The new subject leader of mathematics is beginning to have an impact on raising standards by challenging and improving previously weaker teaching.
- Leaders have focused strongly on ensuring that standards of behaviour continue to improve. The newly introduced behaviour policy has resulted in both staff and students being clear about what is expected. Students know that there will be immediate consequences if they disrupt the learning of others, saying that it has improved their learning experience within the classroom.
- Procedures to track progress are thorough. Regular patterns of assessment have been established, followed by rigorous analysis of the performance of both individuals and groups of students. Leaders ensure that all students are treated equally and that there is no discrimination.
- Procedures to tackle underachievement have been strengthened, involving faculty leaders and heads of house, so that the underlying reasons for falling below target can be thoroughly addressed. The progress and well-being of disadvantaged students is a strong focus across the college and leaders carefully check the impact of additional funding, including the impact on raising the attendance levels of this group of students. Attendance rates are now rising dramatically.
- The curriculum that students follow is flexible to match students' interests and abilities, with more time being allocated for English and mathematics for the least-able students. Literacy and numeracy are well promoted across different subjects. Independent careers advice is a strength of the provision and is offered to all students who are well supported in their option choices. There are no students not in education, employment or training. (NEETS)
- Students at risk of exclusion and those facing challenging circumstances are offered a wide range of alternative courses matching their needs and interests. They are also able to gain appropriate qualifications including in English and mathematics. Their attendance, progress and well-being are closely monitored by the college's leaders.
- Safeguarding procedures and policies are thorough and child protection arrangements are robust. There is good liaison between the college and external agencies when required.
- The college is constantly seeking to engage parents in their children's education. Governors have appointed a 'Parents' Champion' to support parents who lack confidence on approaching the college.

- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well throughout the college. Frequent opportunities to collaborate and develop teamwork in lessons together with opportunities to take leadership roles have resulted in students developing their self-confidence.
- The local authority regularly monitors the college's performance and has provided support over recent years to promote improved teaching in mathematics and to commission a review of the governing body by a National Leader of Governance.
- The principal is relentless in his efforts to raise the quality of mathematics teaching. He has taken strong action to eradicate inadequate teaching, appointing a new head of faculty and other new leaders to drive improvements. This is now beginning to show an impact for current students who are now making better progress.
- The new leader of the sixth form is well supported by the college's senior leaders, sharing their vision for excellence and is beginning to have an impact on the quality of provision. Progress is thoroughly tracked and analysed, underperformance identified and students supported appropriately.
- Although students are taught in ability sets for English, mathematics and science and leaders check that teachers plan to meet the needs of different ability groups within each class, there remains some inconsistency in the challenge provided for the most-able students.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a clear vision for the college and give a strong lead to its direction, particularly in their focus on amalgamating the two parts of the school. They are well-informed about data relating to the college's performance and how it compares to schools nationally, enabling them to provide a balance of challenge and support for senior leaders. Governors are fully involved in the life of the college. They make regular visits, including joining in the scrutiny of students' work alongside subject leaders.
 - Governors ensure that performance management procedures are effective and that teachers' salary progression is linked to the achievement of their students. They monitor carefully the impact of additional funding on the progress and well-being of disadvantaged students.
 - Governors ensure that they access training and are constantly seeking to improve their practice. They focus strongly on ensuring that respect, tolerance and an understanding of individual responsibility remain college priorities. Governors also make sure that students and staff are well informed about dangers such as extremism and forced marriage. They ensure that safeguarding procedures are robust.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. Students show enthusiasm for their learning, are keen to contribute their answers and opinions and to achieve their best. They were observed in lessons often engrossed in a task, showing pride in their work and presenting it well. They also wear their uniform with pride, looking smart and tidy.
- Behaviour around the large college site is calm and orderly. Students are polite to visitors and say that students from different backgrounds get on well together. One student told inspectors that the best thing about the college is its diversity.
- Students and staff value the new behaviour policy, which they say is clear and effective. During the inspection, all behaviour observed in lessons was good or outstanding and students say that this is typical. Students who misbehave are quickly supported through a clear set of consequences so that learning of others is not disrupted.
- Exclusion rates have fallen. Students are kept on site in an internal exclusion room where they can be supervised and supported to carry out their college work. Students with behavioural problems are very well supported and their behaviour and achievement improve as a result.

- Students contribute well to college life, for example supporting younger students in the high school and through the student council. Members take their roles seriously and value the way that the college will listen to and act upon their opinions, including on the quality of teaching.
- Attendance rates, that have been low, are rising rapidly. Persistent absence is falling as a result of the close support provided for students and their families to ensure all students attend regularly.
- Behaviour in the sixth form is exemplary. Students show highly positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well.

Safety

- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good. The team managing students' personal development, including behaviour managers, are well organised and ensure that barriers to learning are quickly addressed. Child protection systems are very well led by a strong, qualified team, who involve external agencies, both to support individual students and to deliver training to staff.
- Students say that bullying is rare and that there is always someone who will listen and support them. They have a clear understanding of what to do if they experience cyber-bullying and say that the college does not tolerate racism or homophobia. They told inspectors that they are fully informed about the dangers of modern life, including extremism, through assemblies and personal and social development lessons. They have a good understanding of modern British values.
- The large college site, used by the community, is monitored by closed circuit television cameras and behaviour managers constantly patrol it. Students say such vigilance helps them feel safe. All parents who responded to the college's questionnaire expressed the view that their children are kept safe. Almost all staff and parents say that students behave well and inspectors endorsed this view.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Leaders' monitoring of all aspects of teaching throughout the year and the progress that students make shows that most teaching, including in the sixth form, has improved. However, there remains some inconsistency, and teaching in mathematics has not been of a good enough quality to successfully tackle the slower progress in this subject.
- Teachers in mathematics have not yet successfully addressed the gaps in students' learning as a result of the inadequate teaching they previously experienced. These gaps hamper students' progress. Tasks that are set do not always sufficiently challenge or engage students, because they do not understand their relevance.
- Not all teachers stretch the most-able students, resulting in some students finding tasks too easy, which slows their progress. Teachers plan well to match tasks to the other abilities within each class. They provide a range of challenges that enable all other groups to achieve, including a focus on students who are disabled, those with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.
- Some teachers do not evaluate the learning of students during a lesson, for example, through questioning, to evaluate how well they understand and to provide extra support or challenge as a result.
- The college's marking system is used well at Key Stage 4. Students know their target grades, and can often articulate precisely what they need to do to achieve them. Students across subjects in Key Stage 4 are accustomed to responding to teachers' detailed advice or targets by redrafting their work or trying another challenge to show they understand. This is not always the case in those subjects in the sixth form where students' progress is slower.
- Where students make the fastest progress, such as in English, teachers have high expectations, make the assessment criteria clear and enable students to check for themselves how well they are doing. For example, in a textiles lesson, students were not only provided with extremely detailed feedback related to the task being assessed, including precise instructions on how to develop further, but also were provided with examples of what a grade 'A' piece of work looked like as compared to a lower grade.

- Literacy and numeracy are promoted well across different subjects with teachers placing a strong focus on the technical language for each subject and frequently using graphs, for example, to present data.
- Most teachers promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well, providing opportunities for students to work together, enabling the development of teamwork and leadership skills. Relationships between adults and students are warm and classrooms calm.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the college in Year 10 with basic skills in reading, writing, communication and mathematics that are typically broadly average. The proportion of Year 11 students gaining five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, below average in 2013, improved to broadly average in 2014. Attainment in mathematics also rose slightly in 2014, after a period when the department was suffering disruption to staffing and weaker teaching. In English, although broadly average, standards also improved slightly in 2014.
- Over the past two years, students have made good progress in English, and current assessments indicate that the current Year 11 students are now making outstanding progress in this subject. Progress in mathematics has been slower, although the current Year 11 students are targeted to make good progress by the end of the year, with a larger proportion of students exceeding expected progress rates. There is no significant difference in achievement between students of different ethnic backgrounds or between those who speak English as an additional language and other students.
- Over the past three years, overall standards in the sixth form have remained average in both academic and work-based courses. Students consistently make expected progress.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is good and sometimes outstanding, because the support they receive is so well organised. All teachers are provided with clear details about how best to ensure their achievement. Expert teaching assistants provide excellent support in lessons.
- Over the past three years the gap between the achievement of disadvantaged students and other students in the school and students nationally has narrowed. In 2014, there was no gap between disadvantaged students and their classmates in either English or mathematics. However, their attainment remained behind students nationally in this subject. In 2014, the gap in the proportion making or exceeding expected progress in these subjects closed substantially, as a result of the strong focus by leaders on the achievement of this group.
- Leaders have also increased the expectation of the achievement of the most-able students. All teachers now identify this group of students in their planning of learning and leaders check on their progress. Rates of progress are increasing year on year, particularly in English where these students made outstanding progress in 2014. Current students are expected to continue this trend, although there remains some inconsistency across subjects. All students are set challenging targets.
- No students are entered early for GCSE mathematics. All students on alternative provision achieve well on their wide variety of courses and in their college-based subjects.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching in the sixth form is inconsistent. As a result, students achieve much better in some subjects than in others and the high performing subjects vary from year to year. In weaker subjects, the quality of marking and feedback does not provide students with enough guidance on how to improve their work.
- The guidance provided for students on the selection of courses has improved, particularly in relation to

work-related courses, leading to a change to more stringent admission requirements. Students are able to enter the sixth form to follow a variety of pathways according to their prior attainment including retaking GCSE English and/or mathematics. This is now leading to greater consistency of achievement across different subjects.

- Over the past two years, disadvantaged students, disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieved above national levels and all stayed on to complete their courses in Year 13.
- Personal and social skills are developed alongside employability skills. Strong links with apprenticeship schemes, universities and Loughborough College have resulted in all students going on to further or higher education, entering apprenticeship schemes, or employment in 2014.
- Sixth-form students told inspectors how much they enjoy college and the opportunities they have to develop leadership through supporting younger students. Attendance and punctuality in the sixth form are good.
- Students say that teachers provide good support. They value the good careers guidance they receive and say that they are well supported and cared for.
- The elite Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence course, (AASE) attracts talented basketball players from home and abroad. Students successfully work to attain a City and Guilds advanced qualification alongside A levels. Many students go on to play for professional teams or gain scholarships to university. The successful course also results in a recognised coaching qualification.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	120236
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	441932

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	14–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	570
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Don Wix
Principal	Mark Sutton
Date of previous school inspection	31 October 2014
Telephone number	01509 554400
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Email address	office@charnwoodcollege.org

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