

Charnwood College (Upper)

Thorpe Hill, Loughborough, LE11 4SQ

Inspection dates

31 October–1 November 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- The quality of teaching is too variable, both between subjects and within departments.
- Students do less well in mathematics at Key Stage 4 than they do in their other subjects.
- Teaching in mathematics is currently not strong enough to ensure that students make better progress at Key Stage 4.
- There are notable inconsistencies in planning and the checking of students' work, including marking, homework and the feedback they receive from teachers.
- Students do not all know what their target grades are, how well they are currently doing or what they need to do to improve their work to reach higher grades.
- Students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form only achieve average standards overall from broadly average starting points.
- The sixth form also requires improvement.
- Senior members of staff and subject leaders have not addressed inconsistencies in teaching with sufficient rigour.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is improving, and the current arrangements for staff training are starting to make a noticeable difference.
- The new leadership team, ably supported by the governing body, have good plans and systems in place to address the known areas of weakness.
- Some weaker subject performance has been identified and addressed, with improvements already seen in examination results.
- Pupils who need extra help, including those supported by pupil premium funding, are now making better progress and catching up.
- Students have good attitudes to learning. They feel safe, are polite and courteous, and demonstrate a mature attitude to their studies.
- Students have good opportunities to involve themselves in a wide range of college activities, including leadership responsibilities.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of students is good and has continued to improve since the previous inspection.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 39 lessons taught by different members of staff. They also visited nine tutor group sessions and observed many different areas of the college and the site during lessons and at break times.
- Meetings were held with four different groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body with another governor, senior staff, subject leaders and an adviser from the local authority.
- The inspection team examined a range of college documentation including: safeguarding and child protection arrangements; development plans and policies; lesson and departmental plans; records of lesson monitoring and checks on students' work; and the minutes of meetings, including those of the governing body.
- The 13 responses made to Parent View were considered, along with an analysis of the college's own parental questionnaire. Staff questionnaires were also considered.

Inspection team

David Martin, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Richard White

Additional Inspector

Lynn Cox

Additional Inspector

Nina Bee

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Charnwood College (Upper) is a broadly average-sized secondary school with slightly fewer girls than boys. It is recently federated under a single principal with Charnwood College (High), which shares the same campus.
- It is a specialist sports college with a wide range of partnerships and networks. The college holds International School status and Healthy Schools status, and has the Sportsmark Gold, Artsmark Gold and Mentoring awards.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, extra money given to schools by the government, is a little above average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than found nationally and rising; the proportion who speak English as an additional language is also high. The majority of pupils are White British, with a significant proportion from Indian and Bangladeshi backgrounds and a growing proportion from Eastern European backgrounds.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is a little below average at all levels of support.
- The college has 22 boarding students, around half of whom come from other countries. The boarding provision has been inspected separately from the college and a report can be found on the Ofsted website. There is also a playgroup that is subject to separate inspection.
- The college meets current government floor standard, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Reduce the variation in the quality of teaching across the college and within departments, eliminating inadequate and weak teaching by:
 - planning lessons in ways that consistently meet college expectations, particularly in terms of addressing the needs of different groups within classes
 - ensuring that all students understand the targets that they are set and know the levels that they are currently working at
 - making sure that all students receive timely and helpful feedback on their work, both in class and through marking so they know how to improve it
 - ensuring that all teachers regularly check how well students are learning during lessons and adjusting their teaching approaches as a result to meet the needs of all
 - increasing the opportunities that students have to learn independently and to be actively involved in lessons
 - setting appropriate and challenging homework in all subjects.
- Improve the progress made by students in mathematics at Key Stage 4
 - so that the proportion of students achieving and exceeding expected levels of progress is at least average by July 2013 and better than average by July 2014
 - by improving the quality of teaching in mathematics at Key Stage 4 so that none is inadequate or weak and most is of a good standard by July 2014.
- Ensure that leaders at all levels, through existing line management arrangements, are regularly checking that identified weaker elements of teaching are being rigorously addressed and improved, from January 2013.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- By the end of Year 11, students are achieving broadly average standards. Achievement in English has been significantly stronger in the last few years, whilst achievement in mathematics has been significantly weaker. College leaders and governors are aware of this weakness, and have taken steps to improve performance in mathematics.
- College assessment information indicates that progress is much stronger for current Year 11 students. However, for a variety of reasons, predictions were not met in 2012 and college leaders will need to ensure this progress continues so that students attain at least average results in mathematics.
- In the sixth form, there is a similar picture, with students attaining broadly average standards from broadly average starting points. There are some promising signs of improvement, with more students achieving higher-grade results in 2012. Overall results have also improved, but not strongly.
- The progress of students known to be entitled to the pupil premium has improved in 2012, narrowing the gap with other students. Girls generally outperform boys. No ethnic group performs less well than others, with students who speak English as an additional language often making strong progress.
- The principal and senior staff have identified several underperforming subjects at GCSE and sixth form level. The changes made have led to improved performance in many of these subjects. However, improvements in mathematics have been less marked and are even more urgent.
- The progress seen in lessons during the inspection was very variable, but occasionally inadequate or teaching that required improvement led to students not making the gains in skills, knowledge and understanding that they are capable of. In the better lessons, students made evident gains and were very aware of what they needed to do to reach their challenging targets.
- The new leadership team has reviewed and strengthened the tracking of students and subsequent intervention programmes. This has already resulted in disabled students and those who have special educational needs, and those supported by targeted pupil premium funding, making significant increases in performance, often making better progress than other students.
- Around 20 students are entered early for mathematics GCSE. There is no evidence that this prevents them reaching their potential as nearly all reach or exceed their challenging targets. These students then study a bridging course that prepares them well for sixth form courses, should they choose to follow them.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although teaching has improved, particularly in the last year, weaknesses remain. A few lessons are inadequate, and others are weaker than they should be. There are too few good or outstanding lessons to improve the overall rate of learning and progress.
- Some lesson planning is weak. It does not explain how teaching will meet the different needs of students in a class and is not clear enough about what students will learn. Some planning also

does not identify opportunities for teachers to check how well students are learning during the lesson, so that teaching can be adjusted where necessary. In some lessons where planning had not identified these things, learning slowed because work was not at exactly the right level for the different abilities present.

- Students are sometimes unsure what they should be trying to achieve in a lesson. Many do not know what their target grade is, how well they are currently working, or what they need to do to improve. The marking of work is not always helpful in this respect, and homework is variable in quality.
- In the many good and better lessons, students not only are clear about what they are learning, but have regular opportunities to check for themselves. In the best lessons they are often highly motivated by interesting, varied activities and often take responsibility for leading parts of lessons. This type of learning was not seen in enough lessons.
- Many lessons were dominated by teachers talking, with too few opportunities for students to share their ideas. Questioning often failed to probe for deeper understanding, or seek opportunities for students to build on others' ideas. Opportunities for working more independently were too limited, including in sixth form lessons.
- The college has developed a thorough policy for developing literacy, but this is at an early stage and there was little evidence of the teaching of literacy across different subjects during the inspection. A numeracy policy is also under development, but also not seen in lessons. Higher levels of communication and information technology skills were seen more frequently.
- The support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language is good, with numerous examples of very creative support from adults attached to some subject areas. This support is helping these students make rapid gains in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' positive attitudes to learning are a significant strength of the college. Students enjoy good, respectful relationships with each other and with adults. They are typically polite, mature and considerate. This leads to a harmonious college atmosphere which students believe is greatly improved in recent years.
 - Attendance has been significantly below average in the recent past. This issue has been addressed well by the school, and attendance was just above the average for similar schools last year. Action taken has significantly reduced the proportion of students who are regularly absent from college. There is no complacency, as leaders and governors are aware that there is more to do.
 - Students insisted that any bullying or discrimination is rare, and quickly and efficiently dealt with. College records confirm that this is the case. Students are well informed about different forms of bullying, including homophobic or prejudice-based discrimination. Citizenship and other lessons give them many opportunities to reflect on their own views and those of others.
 - College arrangements to keep students safe are very thorough and kept under regular review. Students feel safe; they behave responsibly in classrooms and around the site. A recent change
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to tutor groups for students across Years 8-11 across the federated schools is welcomed by students as an opportunity for mutual support.

- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of students is good. Students have many opportunities in different subjects to explore a range of relevant moral and cultural issues. There are many leadership opportunities through mentoring, the college council, young sports leader programme and sixth form enrichment activities.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Though many aspects of the college are improving, it is not yet well led and managed because teaching is not good enough. Although policies and ways of working have been improved, inconsistencies remain in the ways that these are put into practice, particularly those relating to teaching. The leadership of this area is improving; the college is aware of weaknesses and has developed a range of effective, individualised training opportunities for staff that are already making a difference.
 - The new leadership team has developed good planning for future development, based on a clear understanding of the priorities facing the college. The leadership team has strengthened the ways that it checks on the work of the college and has taken effective action to improve some weaker areas identified.
 - College leaders have asked students and parents for their views. Most agree that the college is meeting their needs well, but some parents are not certain that the college keeps them as well informed about students' progress as they would like. Most staff express confidence in the new leadership team and the direction that the college is taking.
 - Revised performance management arrangements take full account of the new Teachers' Standards. They provide a clearer understanding of the raised expectations of staff in terms of teaching quality and student achievement, particularly for teachers holding subject or senior responsibilities, but also for all staff as they progress in their careers.
 - The range of courses offered is good, particularly in its impact on students' personal development and for the provision made for particular groups, including those with special educational needs or for those who speak English as an additional language. The quality of alternative off-site provision made for a small number of students is carefully checked by the college and always leads to appropriate qualifications.
 - College leaders have identified specific funding for students supported by the pupil premium. This has been well used to provide activities to boost the progress of these students, with considerable success in narrowing gaps in achievement. As a result, the difference between the standards attained by students known to be eligible for the pupil premium and other students is smaller than the gap nationally. Future plans are even more precisely targeted for this group.
 - The sports specialism contributes a great deal to the positive atmosphere within the college. Through a broad range of cultural activities, visits and extensive links with business, the local university and other organisations and providers, students are well prepared for life in a modern British multicultural society.
 - The local authority has provided appropriate support to the college through a time of significant
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change. The school development adviser has been involved in lesson observations, has contributed well to departmental reviews, and has a good understanding of current development priorities.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is responsible for creating the vision for the future of the Charnwood College on one campus, which has been put into action effectively by the recently appointed principal and his team. Governors have good information about the college through visits and their links with departments. They know the strengths and weaknesses in teaching, gaining first-hand views by attending the feedback given on departmental reviews, for example. They understand data that shows how well the college performs relative to similar schools. The budget is well managed, with plans to balance the overspend that was agreed with the local authority during the federation of the two colleges. Governors ensure that members receive regular training to update their knowledge and skills. They hold the college to account well. The Principal has challenging targets to meet for his own performance management, although there is no specific target relating to the quality of teaching. Governors are determined that future staff career progression is related directly to teaching quality and the progress that students make.
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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	400177

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	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	835
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	310
Number of boarders on roll	22
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Don Wix
Principal	Mark Sutton
Date of previous school inspection	6 October 2010
Telephone number	01509 554400
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Email address	office@charnwoodcollege.org

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