

Oak Grove College

The Boulevard, Worthing, West Sussex, BN13 1JX

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Students do not make as much progress in English as they should. They improve their reading abilities well because of effective special lessons. However, their learning has not moved forward as quickly in other aspects of the subject.
- Students' progress in mathematics through Key Stage 3 is not as quick as in other subjects. This prevents them achieving as much as they could by the end of Key Stage 4. Better leadership more recently has led to progress improving significantly.
- Teaching, particularly in English, is not always well matched to students' needs. This is because teachers do not use information about students' abilities to plan lessons effectively enough.
- Leaders have not ensured that their systems, for checking students' progress and sharing this information between teachers, work as well in English as they do in other subjects.
- The sixth form requires improvement. The weaknesses in English can be seen in students' progress throughout the college.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' learning in a wide range of other subjects is often good or better. In the college's specialist subjects such as music, art and drama, students regularly make exceptional progress.
- Students behave well and enjoy coming to college. Leaders have successfully reduced the number of exclusions through introducing better systems to manage students' behaviour.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well supported so that they gain a rounded understanding of the world.
- The effectiveness of the governing body has improved. The support and challenge they provide to leaders is increasingly rigorous.
- The headteacher has successfully improved teaching and leadership in a number of subjects since his appointment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors, together with the headteacher and members of the leadership team, observed teaching and learning in 29 lessons, taught by 23 teachers and other appropriately qualified staff.
- Students, teachers and college leaders met with the inspectors to discuss the college's work.
- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- The inspectors looked carefully at a range of documents including the college's self-evaluation and development plan.
- The inspectors considered the views of 24 parents provided through the Parent View website and the responses to 72 staff questionnaires.

Inspection team

Jon Carter, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Andy Lole

Additional Inspector

Veronica Young

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. He has been in post since September 2011.
- All students have statements of special educational needs. The main needs of students are moderate learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorders and severe learning difficulties. The college also has smaller proportions of students who have speech, language and communication needs, profound and multiple learning difficulties and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding for looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is above average.
- Most students come from White British backgrounds.
- The school has specialist arts college status. It does not make use of alternative provision.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching of English, so that students' progress improves quickly in all aspects of the subject, by ensuring that:
 - information from checks on students' progress is used effectively by teachers to plan learning activities which are well matched to students' needs and abilities
 - targets that are set for students are written in language that they can easily understand
 - teachers in all subjects have a good knowledge of how to teach reading skills using approaches that are based on the sounds that letters make (phonics).
- Improve leadership and management, particularly of the teaching of English, by:
 - ensuring that information about students' skills and development in English is shared with staff in all subject areas
 - monitoring more effectively how teachers are using this information to plan learning in all lessons that helps to develop students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills
 - ensuring that senior leaders provide focused mentoring and support to the English subject leader to enable these changes to take place rapidly.
- Improve students' progress in mathematics, by:
 - setting targets for Key Stage 4 students that aim to catch up on the slower progress they made in Key Stage 3.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students in all years of the college, whatever their disability or difficulty, make slower progress in English than they should. Their learning is not monitored and recorded effectively. As a result, staff are not fully aware of students' individual achievements in reading, writing, speaking and listening. This means that students are not helped quickly enough to move on to new learning from what they already know, understand and can do.
- Students do not make progress as quickly in mathematics during Key Stage 3 as they do in other subjects. However, strong leadership has now established systems that allow effective monitoring and sharing of students' achievement. Students' progress has improved at a faster rate since these systems were put in place.
- Students make the right amount of progress in mathematics through Years 10 and 11. This ensures that students achieve the target GCSE examination grades set for them at the end of Key Stage 3. However, this rate of progress is not enough to overcome the slower progress made in Key Stage 3, so students are not achieving as well as they could over time.
- Students' reading skills improve well. Special lessons for those who find reading most difficult help them to learn new skills very quickly. Students who are taught reading skills using the sounds letters make (known as phonics) show they understand how to use letter sounds to say unfamiliar words. However, not all students benefit from this approach because of inconsistent teaching.
- Students who have very significant disabilities and special educational needs develop very well because their needs are understood comprehensively by the staff that teach them. The progress made by individuals, for example in their use of different communication methods, is due to highly personalised and effective teaching. This is a positive example of the how the college treats all of its students equally by valuing their differences.
- Students who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium make progress that is at least as good as, and often better than, their peers. This is because the additional activities and support provided with the funding improve students' engagement with learning.
- Students' attainment is low compared to all students nationally because of their disabilities and special educational needs. Nevertheless, at the end of Key Stage 4, students gain a range of accredited qualifications. These include, for example: GCSEs in art and design, and mathematics; entry level qualifications in English, science and a range of vocational subjects; and BTEC level 1 in vocational studies and performing arts. The college does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.
- Students who continue into the sixth form are prepared well for moving on to further education, particularly when they plan to study performing arts.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Lesson planning does not consistently make sure that students are given work of the correct difficulty, particularly in English. This is because teachers do not always use progress information most effectively. Students' numeracy skills are improving more quickly than their literacy skills because information about their achievements is shared and used more effectively.
- Students' reading, writing and communication skills are not always improved in lessons other than English. This is because teachers have different abilities in teaching reading using the sounds letters make. For example, instead of students being encouraged to spell an unfamiliar word by breaking it down into its different sounds, some teachers just spell the word for them.
- Targets that are written for students do not always help them to understand clearly what they are aiming to achieve, particularly in English. This is because they are sometimes written in

language that is too difficult for them to understand.

- In some lessons, targets are communicated and used more effectively. For example, in a mathematics lesson, words and symbols were used together to ensure that students understood what they were aiming to achieve.
- Teachers and other adults often question students skilfully during lessons. This helps to promote independence because students are encouraged to think more for themselves, rather than rely upon the adult helping them. It also helps to improve students' confidence because they can reflect on what they have learned successfully.
- Strong teaching in some areas, particularly within the college's arts specialism, has ensured that students make excellent progress over time in these subjects. In these lessons, planning is highly personalised and takes very good account of the needs and abilities of individual students.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' positive attitudes to college help them to make good progress in many lessons. Their engagement in practical and creative learning is especially strong. For example, students learning in the college's large and versatile outdoor education area were observed to be highly engaged in building, metal working and pyrography activities.
- Students have a good understanding of what bullying is and the different forms it may take, including cyber-bullying and homophobia. They are concerned that it does happen occasionally in the college but are confident that either they or a member of staff will take appropriate action.
- Students have clearly been taught that they have responsibility to look after each other. The diverse range of special educational needs at the college gives plenty of opportunities for learning about building positive relationships and avoiding discrimination on the basis of difference.
- Recent changes to staff responsibilities have seen the introduction of heads of year. This has contributed strongly to improved behaviour around the college. As a result, learning is rarely disrupted and this has reduced significantly the need to use exclusion.
- Students' attendance is sometimes affected by their medical conditions. Where the college identifies concerns about a student due to absence it works appropriately with parents and other services to support the student to improve their attendance. As a result, students attend college regularly and enjoy their lessons.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Since his appointment to the college, the headteacher has been successful in sharing the responsibilities of leadership more widely. He has also established an improved culture of encouraging staff development through coaching and mentoring as they take on new roles. This means that some leaders are more experienced and effective than others.
- The leadership of English has been less successful in improving students' learning and progress than mathematics and other subjects. Systems are not yet as well developed as they need to be to ensure that all staff understand the learning needs of each student in reading, writing, speaking and listening.
- The headteacher and other college leaders regularly check learning in lessons. Their visits show that teaching is not consistently strong throughout the college. They have used the information about the quality of teaching to make sensible decisions about the support that staff need to help them improve.
- Experienced teachers are expected to contribute fully to supporting their colleagues, through coaching and mentoring activities. This is recognised in the college's pay structure so that

teachers have to demonstrate their commitment and effectiveness in order to be awarded an increase in their salary.

- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has, with appropriate support from the local authority, successfully taken the college through a period of significant change. His honest and accurate evaluation, communicated clearly to staff, ensures that everyone knows what needs to happen to address the weaknesses and build upon the strengths. The success of the changes made so far demonstrate the college's capacity to continue to improve.
 - The subjects that students study in class are brought to life in the broad range of supporting activities offered by the college. For example, all students, irrespective of their special educational needs, have opportunities to take part in productions that are performed at local theatres. These are well received by students, parents and members of the general public.
 - Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is supported very well, in specialist subjects offered and in outdoor and practical lessons. Displays of students' art and sculpture, students' construction of new projects and learning in a variety of outdoor classrooms give students lots of opportunities to reflect on their own success and the wonders of the world around them.
 - The arrangements made to ensure that students are kept safe meet current requirements. There is regular review by senior leaders and the governing body to ensure that this is maintained.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body, led by two co-chairs since just before the last inspection, has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. This has been gained from visits that governors make to classes, as well as discussions with staff and information from the headteacher. They have improved how effectively they support the college and increasingly hold leaders to account because they have received and acted upon training in how to do this well. They are now better equipped to understand the data and can, for example, speak with authority about the differences between performance in English and mathematics. Their confidence in the recently appointed headteacher is well placed and expressed through the clarity they have about how performance management is much more formally aligned to teachers' performance in the classroom and as leaders. They have a thorough knowledge of how the college's budget is spent, including pupil premium funding. However, they have not yet fully examined the impact of this funding on students' learning.
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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	126161
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	402384

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	56
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Liz Cook and Christine Chalmers (joint chairs)
Headteacher	Phillip Potter
Date of previous school inspection	7–8 July 2010
Telephone number	01903 708870
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