

Bassingbourn Village College

South End, Bassingbourn, Royston, SG8 5NJ

Inspection dates 27–28 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Leadership and management	Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well and gain good results, notably in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
- Most teaching is either good or outstanding. Teachers use their subject knowledge well, and plan and adapt lessons to enable students to make progress.
- Students complete their courses, develop skills and gain good examination results which enable the vast majority to successfully move to the next stage of their education.
- Positive attitudes in class between teachers and students and amongst students build relationships which create a good climate for learning.
- Students say that they get on well together, that there is little bullying and that they feel safe in an open and pleasant college setting. Consequently behaviour and safety are good.
- A new principal has taken as his main focus developing all staff in order to improve teaching and learning. This is proving effective.
- A highly skilled Governing Body works effectively with the college and parents and provides leaders with constant challenge.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching does not always ensure that challenging questions are asked to check students' knowledge and understanding so that they can make faster progress and achieve exceptionally well.
- Marking does not always make the most of opportunities to help students know how to learn and achieve better.
- Student data has yet to be used well enough to identify and challenge students appropriately and ensure they make the best possible progress
- The curriculum is yet to meet the needs of all the students joining and at the college so as to provide rich opportunities for high quality learning.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 28 lessons, of which four were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, the inspection team attended registrations and tutor sessions and made a number of short visits around the college.
- Meetings were held with four groups of students, the Chair and a second member of the Governing Body and college staff, including subject leaders. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors analysed the 72 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), a letter from a parent and the 40 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- They observed the work of the college and looked carefully at numerous documents, including checks on teaching, minutes of meetings of the Governing Body, case studies relating to exclusions, support for vulnerable students, and policies and records relating to students' achievement, attendance, punctuality, behaviour, safety, bullying, and safeguarding.

Inspection team

James Coyle, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Paul O'Shea

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Caroline Pardy

Additional Inspector

Stuart Gray

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized secondary college, which serves students in the village of Bassingbourn and the area around southwest Cambridgeshire.
- A new principal has recently taken up appointment at the college.
- The vast majority of students are White British. The proportions from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average.
- The proportion of students supported by school action is well below average, those supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for additional support through the pupil premium (additional government funding available for students known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority or who have a parent in the armed services) is well below the national average.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - using questioning more effectively in order to ensure that students develop deeper knowledge, understanding and skills in all subjects
 - ensuring that there is a consistency in approach when providing effective written feedback so that students know what to do to improve.
- Ensure senior leaders and subject leaders:
 - use information about students to set challenging targets for all so that they maximise progress.
 - guarantee that the curriculum develops further to best meet the needs of all students and provide enriched opportunities for learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When they join the college students have higher attainment levels than those found nationally. Most make progress that compares well with national figures. By the time they have reached the end of their time at the college they are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. However, achievement is not outstanding because many students whose starting points are high do not make the rapid and sustained progress that would enable them to attain exceptionally high results.
- Over time the percentage of students achieving five A* to C passes at GCSE including English and mathematics is consistently above the national average.
- Disabled students or those with special educational needs are identified as soon as they enter the college. They make good progress due to the impact of specific interventions such as the weekly reading recovery programme and English and mathematics support by teaching assistants. The college ensures they go on to achieve well, narrowing the gap in their attainment, because of appropriate support and ensuring they take a suitable blend of subjects.
- The small numbers of students supported by the pupil premium and those known to be eligible for free school meals make satisfactory progress. However, for some of them progress is not yet rapid and sustained. There are gaps in attainment between this group and other groups of students but they are narrowing it faster in maths than in English due in many cases to the catch-up work that they do in Year 7 in order to address any shortfall found at transfer from Year 6.
- Although a small group, students from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language are monitored carefully. Their progress is no different to that of students generally in the college.
- In general reading standards are above the expected levels. The college's reading recovery Catch Up Club initiative is helping encourage more students, especially in Years 7 and 8, to read widely and develop their literacy skills. However, some students are held back by having to move at the same pace as others in the group.
- Students' display good in skills in writing, communication and mathematics across a range of subjects. In a Year 9 history class, for example, students took part in a series of presentations relating to world war two using models, speech, posters and power-point slides. Their feedback was evaluated by peers and revealed impressive depth of knowledge, quality of information and oral skills the lesson as a whole evidenced opportunities for speaking and listening skills.
- When asked, most students were aware of the level at which they were working and what they needed to do to improve. However, there is an inconsistency across subjects in the way written feedback is provided to students so that that they can achieve better and move to the next level.
- Applied and vocational subjects such as construction and work-skills provide personalised learning programmes for the small number of students whose progress may have been limited. This has resulted in high numbers gaining good results and ensuring progression opportunities.

The quality of teaching is good

- Overall teaching was found to reflect the college's own judgements and endorsed the solid base of good teaching taking place, with some deemed outstanding. However, all teaching is still to reach the level of the very best so that all students can make rapid and sustained progress.
- The best teaching is exemplified by good planning, preparation and subject knowledge, as well as through lively pace and regular checks on understanding. As a result students are interested and engaged in their learning.
- Marking is seen in all lessons and excellent feedback is given. However there is some variability in marking across subjects and the way written feedback is provided to students so that that they can learn and achieve better.
- At an early stage in an outstanding Year 7 mathematics lesson the teacher informed the class that she was setting them challenging targets but that she believed in them. They in turn responded by listening attentively as she had them work examples whilst questioning to check their knowledge and understanding and then giving them time to respond. As a result they all had to explain and justify their answers ensuring that they made progress. However this form of assessment is not common practice in many lessons.
- Evidence from parent surveys indicates that they consider teaching to be good.
- There is a whole college focus on literacy, mathematics and communication skills. Training has taken place for teachers and teaching assistants and in an impact study students report that there is now a more consistent approach to the use of literacy across all subjects.
- The needs of the majority of students are met by the range of largely academic subjects offered. These are enhanced by additional activities, such as Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, Amnesty, dance shows, concerts, plays and awards evenings, as well as a range of lunch and after college activities. All forms get good support from their form tutor and contain students of differing ages which contribute to the strong relationships between teachers and students in lessons as well as effecting strong links between students across this small college.
- Specific individual support is provided by teaching assistants who are deployed across English and mathematics. However there is inconsistency in the way their work is planned with subject teachers to support individual students, as well as maximising their effectiveness in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Attendance is above the national average and students say they like the environment and coming to college. They arrive promptly to college and to their lessons. Participation in lessons is good and students display positive attitudes to their learning, treating each other and staff with respect.
- Permanent and fixed term exclusions at the college are below the average for secondary schools.
- Discussions with a range of students from across the college and their parents and carers, together with staff surveys, confirm that behaviour is good and the college and other venues attended by students are safe places for learning.

- The college supports students with information about how to stay safe through its effective personal, social and health education programme which includes aspects on internet safety and cyber-bullying.
- When and if bullying does occur, either in the form of racist, physical, homophobic or e-bullying students say that the college deals with it quickly so that lessons are not interrupted. Years 7 and 9 say they are well informed about the hurt that name calling causes through an effective personal, social and health education programme.

The leadership and management are good

- The leadership continues to raise achievement levels for all groups and is well supported the governing body, who share the aspiration to become an outstanding college. Students appreciate their efforts.
- Since the last inspection the priority has been the drive to improve teaching and learning so that all teaching is outstanding. Robust monitoring by senior leaders and heads of subjects has seen progress towards this goal. It has been supported by good professional development, effective coaching and a directory of best practice.
- Although this has led to better outcomes for many students, the college recognises that there is still work to do, notably working more effectively with teaching assistants and assessment.
- The college monitors results for different groups of students and in particular those whose circumstances make them vulnerable and have taken action to close the gaps specifically in English and mathematics. A commitment to equality of opportunity means that students from different minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language achieve in line with others.
- New and improved systems for monitoring student progress have provided a more personalised approach to support, which students value. However this information is not yet always used well enough to identify and challenge them to ensure they make the best possible progress.
- Students' enjoy a good range of cultural visits both within the UK, including theatres and museums. Trips abroad have included Poland, Iceland, Croatia, Italy and France. Trips are themed and link back to subjects where spiritual, social and moral issues are discussed, for example Auschwitz. The college uses immersive days to broaden and develop these themes. Students reflect on their own circumstances and responsibilities and are encouraged to take part in charity schemes. An assembly on fair trade was picked up for debate and discussion in tutor sessions which extended their thinking beyond the UK. They develop leadership skills through a college student leadership group who oversee and merit system with prizes and a Year11 buddy system to support younger students.
- Programmes of study meet the needs of the majority of students effectively. Alternative provision for Key Stage 4 students includes workskills, sport and construction. This broadens the range of courses available to better suit certain students' learning styles and abilities but still aims for them to gain access to eight GCSEs or equivalent. The college is aware that changes to intake will necessitate broadening the range of subjects on offer in order to rich opportunities for high quality learning.
- Early entry of students in GCSE examinations was piloted with a high ability mathematics group and has met with marked success.

- Returns from Parent View and the college's own parent surveys are mainly positive about the college.
- Statutory safeguarding requirements are met, including off site checks on attendance at work experience placements.
- During the last academic year the local authority conducted a teaching and learning review designed to moderate the college's own evaluation. Its findings provided college leaders with additional areas for improvement which has informed planning. They currently maintain a minimal level of engagement with the college through an area partnership network to support college improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

Governance is organised into a committee structure which allows governors to monitor teaching and the college's overall performance, hold the principal and senior leaders to account, improve their own skills and keep oversight of how well the college performs compared with others. There is an understanding of the systems for managing teachers' performance and pay progression and for tackling any under-performance and how these link to students' achievement and additional professional duties. Governors ensure efficient management of financial resources, including use of pupil premium funding to engage parents through Learn to Learn, visits, accelerated reading and support that ensures success for targeted students achieving good results at the end of Year 11. They maintain an ongoing focus on driving up parental engagement through surveys and a parent's forum chaired by a governor.

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	137427
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	402756

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

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	624
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Rachel Talbot
Principal	Duncan Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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