

Countesthorpe Community College

Winchester Road, Countesthorpe, Leicestershire, LE8 5PR

Inspection dates 8–9 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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' progress and achievement requires improvement, particularly that of boys and most students in mathematics.
- There is too wide a gap in the attainment and progress of students for whom the college receives additional government funding and all other students.
- The progress of some students is affected by persistent absences, and attendance rates in Key Stage 4 are below average.
- The college is rich in data about its students, and uses this to predict eventual success. However, actual progress has not been evaluated effectively enough to ensure that students are improving sufficiently quickly.
- Leadership, management and governance require improvement because their work in improving teaching has not had sufficient impact in ensuring that students make good enough progress, particularly in mathematics.
- Teaching in Key Stage 4 requires improvement. Lessons are not planned consistently enough to involve all individuals and challenge all groups of students.
- Marking and teachers' use of questioning in Key Stage 4 is not used to check sufficiently thoroughly on students' understanding, or give sufficient guidance as to how to improve.
- Attainment overall in GCSE examinations has remained average for the last three years.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' attitudes to learning are good. They generally behave well in lessons and around the college site; discussions with students show they feel safe while at school.
- The college offers a good range and choice of courses for its students.
- The close working relationship between staff and students is commendable. This is an important quality of the college that is particularly valued by parents.
- The sixth form is good. Students' achievement is good, and teaching is stronger in the sixth form than in Key Stage 4. This helps students to make good progress.
- Strong partnerships are developing between the schools within the academy trust. In this, there is clear leadership from the Principal, other members of the senior and middle leadership teams and governors.
- There is a good approach within the trust to ensuring continuity of education across the primary and secondary education phases.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 39 lessons, including nine which were seen jointly with members of the school’s leadership team. Thirty-four teachers were seen working with the students. It was not possible to see some classes due to examination work or courses having been completed.
- Meetings were held with groups of students selected at random by the lead inspector. These included those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with students.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including performance data, development plans, policies, self-evaluation reports, various monitoring files, safeguarding and curriculum materials, governing body documents, and information provided for families.
- Discussions were held with the Principal and other members of the senior leadership team, heads of department, class teachers, teaching assistants, the special educational needs coordinator, administrative staff and members of the governing body.
- Conversations were held with the college’s consultant improvement adviser and the headteachers of its partner high schools within the academy trust.
- The inspectors took into consideration the 147 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). The 63 responses to the questionnaire for school staff were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Jerry Seymour	Additional Inspector
Victoria Bishop	Additional Inspector
Denise Newsome	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized secondary school serving families from a wide geographical area, covering both rural and urban communities. It is a specialist technology college.
- Most students are White British. A very few come from various other ethnic backgrounds. The percentage known to speak English as an additional language is well below average.
- The proportion of students for whom the school receives the pupil premium (additional government funding for particular groups, including those known to be eligible for free school meals) is well below average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is well below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is also well below average.
- Countesthorpe Community College converted to become an academy on 1 August 2012. When its predecessor school, Countesthorpe Community College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be satisfactory.
- As an academy, the college is part of the South Leicestershire Learning Partnership. This academy trust includes Thomas Estley Community College and Leysland High School, both local 11–14 middle deemed-secondary schools, and Cosby Primary School.
- The school is part of the Learning South Leicestershire group of schools. This is a forum for cooperation between maintained and academy schools. Countesthorpe's Principal manages the behaviour partnership section of the Countesthorpe and Lutterworth Group of Schools.
- A few Year 10 and 11 students on the school's roll are taught full-or part-time elsewhere at Tolsam UK, Phoenix Education and Training (Youth Education Project), Educ8 Leicestershire Limited, Community Giants and Autism Outreach. These are all education providers within either Leicestershire or the City of Leicester.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of students by the end of Year 11.
- The governing body manages Early Years, full-day childcare provision for children under five years of age, the Countesthorpe College Day Nursery. The college also works with its partner primary and high schools by providing a Before and After School Club for children and pupils aged 4 to 13. These facilities are inspected separately by Ofsted.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and assessment, and improve students' learning and progress, particularly in Key Stage 4, by ensuring that:
 - a higher proportion of teaching is good and outstanding, and that good practice is shared
 - lessons are planned to meet more consistently the learning needs of all groups of students, including those who are eligible for additional government funding
 - questioning is used more consistently in lessons to involve and challenge all students to think more deeply about their learning, and explain their thinking
 - advice through marking is always followed up to create a dialogue with students about their work, and help them to identify more clearly their next steps in learning.
- Raise students' attainment in mathematics across the school, and improve their progress by:
 - improving the quality of teaching overall in this subject in Key Stage 4
 - ensuring that the momentum for improved progress in mathematics and numeracy is

maintained across all year groups by extending the opportunities for students to use and apply their mathematics skills across a wide range of subjects

- ensuring that all those involved in the monitoring of the work of the mathematics department evaluate fully the impact of improvements on students' progress at the end of each half-term.

■ Ensure the college's leaders and the governing body build on the college's partnerships with other schools in the academy trust in order to:

- develop a more common approach to the teaching and assessment of mathematics across the secondary phase of students' education
- raise standards in mathematics by Year 11, particularly for boys, and enable an increased proportion to gain higher levels in the subject in GCSE examinations
- work to resolve common issues relating to attendance, and enhance the trust schools' work with families to promote the value of a continuous education.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Nationally available data show that the students start their secondary education in Year 7 with average levels of attainment in English and mathematics. The data also show that, after they joined the college in Year 10, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, improved steadily over the past three years, when the college was a local authority school (the predecessor school). However, it remained average.
- In September 2012, the college undertook its own assessments of students' attainment, across a range of subjects, when they joined Year 10. This data show levels of attainment in English and mathematics which are on the borderline of above and well above average.
- Year 9 students are transferring from the academy trust's high schools with standards that are increasingly above average. The inspection evidence shows the college is rising to this challenge, but students' attainment by the end of Year 11 is not yet high enough and their progress is not yet consistently good and therefore requires improvement.
- In terms of their overall points score (the measure by which all students are assessed nationally at the end of each stage of their education), students make expected, but not good, progress by the end of Year 11. In 2012, students' points scores were average in the majority of their GCSE examinations. The percentage gaining higher A* and A passes was also average.
- Students' attainment and progress in GCSE mathematics are weaknesses. The proportion who made the nationally expected progress in the subject, particularly boys, was some 20% below other students nationally. This has not been helped by past, and some present, weaknesses in the mathematics teaching. Over the past three years at the predecessor school, standards in English have been consistently higher than in mathematics. The proportion of girls making better than expected progress in English is much higher than for boys.
- No students are entered early for mathematics examinations. College data show that a higher proportion of current students are on track to gain improved results in mathematics, and make better progress, but this has yet to be tested through actual examination results. Improving attainment and progress in mathematics is an important element in ensuring that the college secures equality of opportunity for all its students and increases their prospects for the future.
- Progress by disabled students and those who have special educational needs is in line with similar students nationally in English but below in mathematics. Individual students often make good progress from their starting points because of personalised support. There are some notable examples of such students achieving very well with specialist support, as was seen in a Year 11 textiles lesson, where they were making rapid progress in their analysis of children's educational products. The progress being made by the very few students for whom English is an additional language is good.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium achieve less well at GCSE than similar students nationally; they gain mainly D grades rather than the C grades attained by most other students at the college. National data show this gap was too wide in 2012. School data indicates the gap is closing for current students, and is predicted to close more over the next couple of years. However, this remains to be tested through examination success.
- Those students who attend off-site provision have their progress monitored regularly. They are enabled to make good progress towards meeting their aspirations for future careers. These

range from being sports coaches and developing circus skills, to being plumbers, electricians, mechanics and construction workers.

- Achievement in the college's specialist technology areas is similar overall to other subjects. There have been some important developments in information and communication technology (ICT) which are benefitting students' learning across the college. Together with strengths in English and literacy, this is aiding well the development of students' communication skills. However, although there are close links between mathematics and science to promote numeracy skills, this is less well developed in other subjects.
- Sixth form students make good progress, given their starting points at the end of Year 11. This is because teaching is typically good and working relationships between staff and students encourage learning. Students achieve particularly well in the Year 12 AS examinations, and are especially successful in applied and vocational courses, including health and social care. Increasing numbers of students are now staying on in Year 13, and move on to further and higher education or employment.
- Excellent progress was seen in a Year 12 dance lesson, where students extended significantly their choreography skills through teamwork, mutual support and the sharing of creative ideas. They encouraged each other to build on established skills and techniques in a developmental manner. In partnership with their teacher, they questioned each other, and assessed each other's contributions constructively; their constant evaluations ensured rapid improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Twenty per cent of the lessons seen were in mathematics. In Key Stage 4, half of the mathematics lessons sampled required improvement. This explains why students' progress in mathematics is not good enough.
- Teaching is mainly good or better in the sixth form, but a third of lessons sampled in Key Stage 4 required improvement. Overall, the quality of teaching in Key Stage 4 is too variable, and not consistently good enough to ensure good progress by the end of Year 11.
- In weaker lessons, planning does not identify or meet sufficiently well the needs of individual students or groups such as those identified with learning difficulties or who are eligible for pupil premium funding. In such lessons, there is often a lack of pace and urgency, or learning is superficial.
- Sometimes, teachers talk too much at the students and do not give them sufficient time to explore or explain their thinking. Although teachers' use of questioning is often good, enabling them to assess students' level of understanding, this is not a consistent feature of teaching throughout the college. Teachers do not all use questioning to fully involve and challenge all students to think about their work and to explain their thinking.
- In some lessons, there is good evidence of students being supported well in the development of their literacy and numeracy. In science and music lessons, there is often a particular emphasis on the correct use of specialist vocabulary and terminology, which supports well the development of students' communication skills. However, that is not always the case. In one Year 10 science lesson, for example, students struggled to apply their mathematical skills to calculate surface area and volume.
- Most teachers assess students' work regularly and accurately, but this approach is inconsistent

across the school. Most marking is good and provides constructive feedback. Although there is an expectation that students will respond to this marking, it is not always the case in practice. Students do know their target grades, but are not consistently clear as to what precisely they need to do to improve and gain higher grades. This is mainly related to weaker teaching.

- In the best lessons, teachers have high expectations of the students and offer challenging tasks which develop skills and deepen students' knowledge and understanding. These lessons are planned well so there is a good pace to the learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' attitudes to learning are good overall. They are very positive in the sixth form, where working relationships between staff and students are often excellent. In Years 10 and 11, students' attitudes tend to be linked to the quality of teaching. In the best lessons, students are fully engaged and work together cooperatively in groups and pairs.
- Behaviour in and around the college is good. Discussions with students show they know how to keep each other safe, both individually and collectively as a community. There is zero tolerance to bullying; the college's records confirm that any bullying or racist incidents are rare, and taken very seriously. Students who have been excluded say they feel the processes were fair overall. They have received good subsequent support; for example, through anger management.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Students show an informed understanding of local community, regional, national and global issues and perspectives. This has broadened their understanding of the wider world. There are often good opportunities for students to use their creative imagination, and reflect on issues. In a Year 11 vocational ICT lesson, students showed they had a good understanding as to how technology facilitates communication and the sharing of information around the world.
- Attendance is above average in the sixth form but below in Years 10 and 11. College data show that most persistent absentees come from outside its traditional catchment area and where travel arrangements prove more difficult. School bus routes have been changed to help resolve this. Discussions with partner headteachers show this to be a collective issue for the trust.
- In some of the lessons where teaching requires improvement, students do not always get the opportunity to work sufficiently independently, preferring to chat and allow themselves to become distracted.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership, management and governance require improvement because their work relating to the monitoring of teaching and learning has not had sufficient impact in ensuring that students make good enough progress overall, and particularly in mathematics. However, the Principal and leadership team have worked effectively in other ways to create a dynamic college community. This is recognised by parents, in their responses to Parent View, and by the staff.
- As part of the college's self-evaluation, there has been a thorough review of mathematics. This has resulted in changes to the staffing and new leadership of the department. College data show that attainment is rising slowly, but the college's leaders have not yet been able to ensure that students achieve well enough in mathematics. Until recently, the monitoring of the work of the department, and of students' progress in mathematics, has not been consistently sharp enough.

- Discussions with the partner high school headteachers show that supporting the college in improving mathematics by Year 11 is a priority for the trust. The schools are launching a pilot project to review thoroughly teaching, learning and what is taught in mathematics. This is an example of the trust's partnership in action and its good potential for future improvement.
- As an academy, the college employs its own school improvement consultant. The consultant makes termly visits, helps advise on and assess standards, and undertakes joint observations of school life with the senior leadership team. Recent work has involved support for mathematics and a review of ICT. The college gains good value from this arrangement.
- During the joint lesson observations, the senior leadership team assessed accurately overall the quality of teaching and learning. Discussions with staff show good levels of self-evaluation. This is reflected well through the setting of targets for teachers to improve their professional skills.
- Systems and processes for safeguarding students fully meet the current regulatory requirements. Students whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable are given good support and valuable guidance. The level of care provided for students is good.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed about the college's performance. Governors are linked to departments and carry out regular visits. Governors challenge as well as support. They are provided with an informative range of data, which enables them to compare and contrast the college's performance with others nationally.
 - Governing body minutes reflect their in-depth discussions about mathematics. However, the March 2013 minutes record, 'The huge challenge facing the college in achieving the substantial improvement in performance required.' Governors are monitoring this closely.
 - There are systematic checks on the effectiveness of teaching. Teachers' performance management targets are linked properly to school improvement priorities; progress on these targets are linked to teachers' salaries. There are clear links with supportive professional development, coaching and training for teachers and governors.
 - The governing body knows how the pupil premium funding is allocated and produces a statement explaining this. The additional government funding is being used to tackle underachievement through a range of support and counselling programmes for students. It is also being used on initiatives to improve the attendance of students who are eligible for the funding. Where necessary, the college ensures equality of opportunity through the provision of essential resources for those whose families could not otherwise afford them.

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	138524
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	409395

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	14–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1068
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	311
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Suzanne Uprichard
Principal	Brian Myatt
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0116 2771555
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