

Cottenham Village College

High Street, Cottenham, Cambridge, CB24 8UA

Inspection dates

26–27 September 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 do not all make as much progress as they should from their different starting points. Standards are improving, but achievement is not yet consistently good.
- Students supported through extra government funding do not make as much progress as other students but the gap is narrowing.
- Not enough teaching is good or better. Teachers do not always plan to meet the different learning needs of the students in their classes.
- Teachers' planning does not include enough opportunities for students to develop the skills of independent learning.
- Teachers do not mark or assess students' work as regularly or as thoroughly as they should. As a result, students do not always know what to do to improve their work.
- Although it is improving, attendance is still below the national average.
- The governing body is now challenging senior leaders over the school's performance but governors are not trained sufficiently in the use of assessment data to help them do this.
- Systems used to improve the quality of teaching and check on the progress of students are not rigorous enough. Senior leaders do not always intervene swiftly enough to support students who are falling behind.

The school has the following strengths

- Support for students in the specialist centres attached to the school is good. Support for disabled students and those who have special educational needs in the main school is also good. These students make good progress.
- The sixth form is good. Success rates are high.
- Students do particularly well in humanities subjects because of the high proportion of outstanding teaching.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are polite, respectful and helpful in lessons and around the school. They are keen to learn and respond well to challenges in lessons.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons, 14 of which were jointly observed with the executive headteacher or another senior leader.
- Inspectors held meetings with the executive headteacher, senior leaders, other leaders, staff, two members of the governing body and a consultant who has been working with the school.
- Inspectors considered parents' and carers' views of the school by analysing the 122 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). They also took note of emails, letters and telephone calls from parents.
- Inspectors examined a number of documents, including records of students' progress, the minutes of governing body meetings and the school's planning documentation. They looked at behaviour, attendance and exclusion records.
- Inspectors talked to students from all year groups and looked at students' work.
- Inspectors analysed responses from 39 staff to an inspection questionnaire.

Inspection team

Denise Newsome, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector
Bob Roberts	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized secondary school. It has a small sixth form which mainly takes disabled students and those who have special educational needs.
- The school became an academy in September 2011 and the executive headteacher was appointed in January 2012. When its predecessor school, Cottenham Village College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- Most of the students are from White British backgrounds.
- All students are educated on the school site and the school makes no use of alternative educational provision elsewhere.
- The school includes specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. There are two specialist centres on site whose students are on the school roll. The Hearing Support Centre is a local authority resource for nine students with a hearing impairment. The Speech and Language Centre is a school-based resource for 14 students with speech, language and communication needs.
- The executive headteacher is also responsible for a separate school for students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties on the same site. This is inspected separately.
- There are more boys than girls on the school roll and some year groups have many more boys than girls in them, including the sixth form.
- A below-average proportion of students receive support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for some children, including children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals. There are currently no students at the school in the care of the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is below the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is above the national average.
- The school 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, particularly in English and mathematics, by making sure that:
 - teachers have high expectations of students of all abilities and challenge all students to make expected or better than expected progress from their starting points
 - marking and assessment systems are consistently applied across the school so that students receive good-quality feedback on what they have done and what they need to do to improve their work
 - the support provided to students supported through pupil premium funding helps them rapidly catch up with other students.
- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school to eradicate any inadequate teaching and move more teaching to consistently good or outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - plan more effectively to meet students' individual needs so that learning is personalised
 - allow students to work more often in groups and on their own so that they develop more independent learning skills.

- Ensure that the governing body and leaders at all levels work to remove any variations in the performance of different groups of students in the school, particularly in English and mathematics, and in the performance of different subjects by:
 - holding teachers more rigorously to account for the progress of the different groups of students in their classes
 - closely and regularly monitoring the progress of different groups of students in each year group and in each subject, with a particular focus on English and mathematics
 - intervening swiftly when students fall behind in their learning
 - ensuring that plans that have already been formulated to monitor and improve the quality of teaching are put in place and are properly evaluated for their impact
 - providing the governing body with enough information about students' attainment and progress to be able to challenge school leaders about the performance of the school.
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Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils **requires improvement**

- Students start at the school with broadly average attainment in most year groups, although it is above average in some. GCSE results in 2013 show that their overall attainment at the end of Year 11 remained broadly average.
- The proportion of students attaining five or more good GCSE passes at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, fell in 2013 but was still above that which is expected nationally. It had been slightly below national averages previously. The proportion of students gaining a good GCSE grade in English dropped very slightly from the previous year. The proportion of students gaining a good GCSE grade in mathematics went up from the previous year.
- A lower proportion of boys than girls gained five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2013, but the gap between their attainment narrowed.
- The proportion of students making expected progress in English stayed the same in 2013 as in the previous year, while the proportion of students making expected progress in mathematics went up. Students with lower starting points made better progress in English and mathematics in 2013 than in the previous year. More-able students did not make as much progress in English in 2013 compared with 2012 but their progress in mathematics was similar. The proportion of students who made better than expected progress fell in English compared to the previous year but went up in mathematics. Boys and girls made similar progress in English in 2013 but boys made better progress than girls in mathematics.
- Students supported through pupil premium funding achieved about one grade lower than other students in their GCSE examinations in 2013. This difference is considerably less than the gap from the previous year. The gap between their progress and that of other students is narrowing rapidly in English and steadily in mathematics. This is because pupil premium funding has been spent effectively on extra help for these students in English and mathematics, including individual tutoring.
- The school has not entered students early for GCSE examinations.
- Students in the sixth form do particularly well, given their low starting points. This is as a result of mainly good and outstanding teaching, and a curriculum which is planned very carefully to ensure that students can achieve qualifications that are appropriate for them.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs make good progress because their progress is monitored very carefully by their teachers. They receive good support from other adults in the specialist centres and in the school.
- The school is using 'catch up' funding to provide additional support in English and mathematics for students in Year 7 who need to catch up with other students. This has not yet had sufficient time to have an impact on improving progress for these students.
- Students' achievement varies between subjects. Students do well in humanities and vocational subjects because of the mainly good and outstanding teaching that they receive. Students did not do as well in 2013 as in the previous year in languages and dance.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although much of the teaching seen during the inspection, including in mathematics, was good and some was outstanding, the overall quality of teaching has not been of a high enough quality in the last two years to secure good achievement. Teaching in English is not as strong as in mathematics.
- Students' views are that much teaching is good but that it varies between teachers.
- Teachers do not always plan lessons which meet the different needs of students. In these lessons, the majority of students complete the same work and so not all of them make the progress that they should. Teachers' expectations are sometimes too low so that students are not always challenged to make good or outstanding progress.
- Students have very few opportunities to develop independent learning skills because many teachers do not plan activities that require students to take any responsibility for their learning. In some of the outstanding lessons, students work in groups on tasks, often challenging themselves to do better and assessing each other's progress, but this is not typical.
- The quality of marking varies too much and it is not consistently good throughout the school. Some marking is of a very high quality, with teachers giving good guidance so that students can improve their work. Too often, though, there is little more than a tick and a comment from the teacher with no suggestions for improvement.
- Students from the specialist centres are fully included in main school lessons and receive very good support from other adults who support them in the classroom. Other adults who support students from the main school, however, are not always used well. Too often they are used to hand out resources or do similar tasks, and do not focus sufficiently on making sure that the students they support make good progress.
- The teaching in the specialist centres is good. Students are timetabled to be taught in very small groups which focus on specialist learning which cannot take place in main school lessons. Activities are planned in detail for each student and linked to individual targets for improvement. This means that the students make good learning gains.
- There are pockets of excellence in teaching and, in the good and outstanding lessons, teachers have an enthusiasm and a passion for their subject. There is a pace and purpose to lessons and student' attitudes to learning are good or outstanding.
- The teaching in the sixth form, particularly in vocational subjects, is mainly good and outstanding. Students respond very well to this and make good progress. There is a strong focus on the development of skills in English and mathematics and in making sure that students learn about what they need to be able to do to get a job.
- Relationships in nearly all lessons are excellent. This helps to create a positive climate for learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is typically good because students are keen to learn and readily participate in classroom activities. In an outstanding physical education lesson, for example, students who were not taking part in the practical activity were very actively involved in evaluation and

showed excellent attitudes to learning. Students get on well with each other and their teachers and are very helpful. They are welcoming to visitors, respectful and well-mannered, and they take good care of the school environment.

- Students in the specialist centres are enthusiastic about their learning and keen to share what they have learnt with others. The support that they receive from other adults ensures that they behave well and have good attitudes to learning.
- In the lessons where teaching is most effective, students show a thirst for knowledge and an obvious enthusiasm for learning. Where teaching is not good or outstanding, students are often passive listeners and do not contribute much to the lesson.
- The school's behaviour management systems are effective. Students say that behaviour is good. There have been no permanent exclusions for two years and the number of fixed-term exclusions is declining.
- Students say that they feel safe in school, and the school is a very safe environment for them to be in. The school site is safe and secure and all the necessary checks are carried out regularly. Students report that there is almost no bullying and that they are confident that if there was any bullying, it would be dealt with immediately by staff and sorted out.
- Students are very aware of how to use the internet safely. They appreciate the 'conference days' that the school holds each term where special topics, such as how to deal with cyber-bullying and internet safety, are taught.
- Students do not generally use words that will offend or upset anyone and are almost always considerate and kind to each other. However, they are not always aware that some words might be considered to be offensive to some groups in society.
- Attendance is improving and the number of students who are persistently absent from school is declining. The college has action plans to continue to improve attendance but it remains below the national average.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because the school's leaders have not yet brought about enough improvement in the quality of teaching and some students are not making sufficient progress, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Leaders are at the early stages of communicating high expectations to teachers through the use of assessment data. The way that teachers are held to account for the progress of different groups of students in their classes has not been sufficiently rigorous, and this has meant that not enough attention has been paid to improving the students' rate of progress. Leaders at all levels have had recent training on how to use data to check students' progress but it is too early to see what impact the training has had on students' achievement.
- The executive headteacher is realistic in his assessment of the school's priorities and action plans focus on the right issues. A review of the senior leadership team's roles and responsibilities has been undertaken recently to ensure that key staff are in place to tackle the main priorities of improving teaching, learning and achievement.
- Staff are universally supportive of the executive headteacher. Governors, parents, staff and

students speak highly of the changes that he has brought about since he has been in post.

- Subject leaders are held to account for the progress of the students in their subject. They are aware of where there are gaps in the attainment of different groups of students. They have benefited from some recent training on how to use assessment data to identify areas where students' progress needs accelerating.
- The leadership of the sixth form is good. A large proportion of students stay in the sixth form for two or more years and make good progress because of the highly personalised curriculum that is provided for them.
- The leadership of the two specialist centres is good. The progress of students is monitored very closely and the students receive a lot of extra help in small groups which ensures that they make good progress. There are good links between the two centres and the rest of the school.
- The way in which the governing body and senior leaders manage teachers' performance is robust and teachers are held accountable against National Standards. The governing body ensures that teachers do not receive pay increases unless they have met their targets and their teaching is good.
- The curriculum meets the needs of the students and is regularly reviewed. Students have a wide range of activities available after school and at lunchtimes, and the numbers of students who take part in these activities is high.
- Students' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They are reflective, generally enjoy learning, work well together and help each other out. They know right from wrong and behave well. There are not many opportunities, however, for cultural development.
- Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and the overwhelming majority would recommend the school to another parent.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very supportive of the executive headteacher and the school's work. Governors work hard to ensure that the school improves. They are now challenging the headteacher more about the progress of students but have not yet had training on using assessment data so that they can challenge school leaders more rigorously over the school's performance. Governors visit the school regularly through an informal programme of visits. The governing body's committees fulfil their responsibilities for aspects of school leadership such as finances, resources and staffing. Governors are aware of how pupil premium funding is being spent and how it is helping students. The governing body makes sure that safeguarding requirements are fully met.

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	137434
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	400224

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Academy converter
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	821
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	58
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Harradine
Headteacher	Stephen Ellison (Executive Headteacher)
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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