

Alfreton Grange Arts College

Grange Street, Alfreton, DE55 7JA

Inspection dates

25–26 September 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement is inadequate because many students, particularly boys, do not make the progress they should in several subjects, and particularly in science.
- The most-able students and those who are disabled or have special educational needs are underachieving.
- The sixth form is inadequate and many students have underachieved or, in the worst cases, achieved nothing at all.
- Teaching is inadequate. A large proportion of lessons is less than good because students are not given tasks which engage or challenge them. Marking is not precise enough to help students improve in a number of subjects.
- Behaviour requires improvement. Students' attitudes to learning are not consistently good and there is some disruption of lessons. Attendance is below average and not improving.
- Leadership and management are inadequate. The headteacher has failed to bring about necessary improvements in the quality of teaching. Students' underachievement has been obvious for some time, especially in the sixth form, but this has not been addressed successfully.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' overall progress is improving in both mathematics and English.
- The school does good work in and out of the classroom in some arts subjects. Music and drama activities have a positive effect on the community.
- Despite the school's problems, most students are proud of it and want to achieve. Many leaders, teachers and support staff are prepared to work very hard to help the students achieve their goals.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 34 lessons taught by 32 teachers. Six of these observations were conducted jointly with three senior members of the school's staff.
- Meetings were held with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders and other leaders, such as the special educational needs coordinator and some subject leaders. An interview took place with three representatives of the governing body including the Chair. Meetings were also held with groups of students.
- Inspectors took account of the 32 responses to the Parent View questionnaire.
- Inspectors reviewed 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team evaluated information including: the college's self-evaluation; behaviour, attendance and exclusion records; information about students' achievement and progress; and documents used by leaders to monitor the college's work.

Inspection team

Ian McNeilly, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Zarina Connolly	Her Majesty's Inspector
Alan Jarvis	Additional Inspector
Glen Goddard	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- The headteacher was suspended on 22nd July 2013 and, as a result, was not interviewed during the inspection process. The school is currently under the leadership of an acting headteacher who was previously a member of the school's senior leadership team.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection of investigations by the appropriate authorities into allegations of wrong-doing that did not concern child protection or safeguarding arrangements. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incidents were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- Inspectors were aware during this inspection that serious allegations of a child protection nature were being investigated by the appropriate authorities. While Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind, actions taken by the setting in response to the incident were considered (where appropriate) alongside the other evidence available at the time of the inspection to inform inspectors' judgements.
- Alfreton Grange Arts College is a smaller-than-average secondary school with a sixth form. It has a specialism in visual and performing arts.
- Most of the students are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of students for whom the college receives the pupil premium is above average. This additional government funding is for students in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and some others.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is just above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just below average.
- The college does not have specially resourced provision for those students who have special educational needs.
- There is no alternative educational provision off-site. The school runs the 'Spyra Centre' on-site, which provides additional support for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 4.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure all teaching is good or better by ensuring all teachers, and particularly in science:
 - plan high-quality, relevant learning in lessons that challenges and engages students
 - mark work regularly so that students understand how to make progress
 - ask thought-provoking questions that extend students' understanding of, and interest in, their work.
- Raise the achievement of all groups, particularly boys, the most-able and disabled students and those who have special educational needs by:
 - consistently setting tasks appropriate to students' ability levels
 - ensuring sixth form students are placed on courses that reflect their abilities and ensure they

are better prepared for life after school

- ensuring that the curriculum in science provides appropriate opportunities for practical work and is better planned and organised so that work is challenging and not repeated in different year-groups.

■ Improve behaviour and safety by:

- ensuring that all teachers address poor student behaviour, including low-level disruption, rigorously and consistently both in the classroom and around the school site
- eliminate the pattern of repeated poor behaviour of a few students by providing training for teachers and leaders in techniques for managing challenging behaviour
- increasing student attendance by researching and implementing techniques used successfully in other schools.

■ Improve leadership and management by:

- establishing an effective, school-wide system of teacher performance management which is both robust and transparent
- developing the skills of the school's senior and middle leaders in monitoring patterns of student performance and in curriculum design, so that they have an increased impact on student achievement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Whilst the overall proportion of students making expected progress is improving in both mathematics and English, this masks underachievement by certain groups of students over time; the most-able in mathematics and the least-able in English do not make the progress expected of them. This was matched by weaknesses in the teaching seen in these subjects by inspectors, which did not always provide opportunities for all-ability groups to reach their potential.
- Disabled students and students with special educational needs supported by school action and school action plus underachieve compared to national averages, although the examination results for students supported with a statement of special educational needs is improving.
- Achievement in science is woeful and has been a cause for concern for some time. One sixth form student said: 'Science has been terrible here for as long as I can remember.' There has been a huge turnover of staff in this department. One student had 14 different teachers. All groups of students have underachieved compared to national averages. The leadership and management of this subject area, as well as the quality of teaching, have been inadequate. The acting headteacher is well aware of this and has plans to address the many issues involved; it is too early to judge the impact of any actions.
- Achievement in languages, history and geography has also been significantly below national averages for some time. In contrast, art and design, performing arts, English literature and some aspects of design and technology consistently achieve results above or in line with national averages. Consequently, there is an inconsistent picture of achievement across subjects in the school.
- The gap between the attainment of boys and girls is wide; boys achieve significantly lower than girls in GCSE examinations and this picture is the same for progress made in both mathematics and English. The gap is also apparent in the sixth form.
- Students known to be eligible for the pupil premium do not make as much progress in English and mathematics as other students. Initial school data for 2013 show the gap in attainment between these students and others in mathematics was equivalent to approximately two-thirds of a grade at GCSE; in English this gap is equivalent to one grade at GCSE. These gaps are smaller than those seen nationally, not because the pupil premium funds are used wisely and effectively, but rather as a result of greater awareness of these students by teachers and some individual support, led by some subject areas.
- Targets are set for all students. However, sometimes these targets are not properly understood or are not sufficiently challenging to ensure that all students make the progress that is expected. This confusion has affected the information provided by teachers after each in-school test, which has led to inaccurate predictions for future achievement and missed opportunities to identify underachievement.
- Students in Year 7 eligible for catch-up premium funding did not receive any coordinated additional support to improve their English and mathematics progress last year; no plans were produced and there was no means of checking on their progress. Despite some very purposeful work by individuals, teaching assistants are not consistently used effectively enough to support pupils' achievement. The current acting headteacher and governors have urgently addressed this issue for this academic year and strong plans are being put in place to support these students.

- A culture of reading for pleasure is not encouraged by all teachers. The library, although well-resourced, is used by a minority of students and there is no effective whole-school strategy to develop reading skills.
- The most-able students who are entered early for mathematics exams have been prevented from achieving the highest grades. The current leadership team has stopped this policy.
- The school has no off-site alternative curriculum provision. The Spyra Centre, which is located and run by the school on-site, provides additional support for vulnerable students. Students say that this is a valuable place for them to improve their behaviour and receive additional support to help them make progress. The leaders of the school are undertaking a review of this provision to ensure it is effective and providing value for money.
- Although some students achieve well in the sixth form, they are in the minority. Achievement overall is inadequate in almost every area, though girls perform significantly better than boys. In 2012, boys achieved a full grade lower than girls at both A and AS levels. Students have been allowed to take inappropriate courses. The curriculum has been inadequate for the lower ability students and this group, in particular, has been failed by the school. For every four students who took GCSE-level courses in the sixth form in 2012, three either failed or dropped out. Mathematics, English, art and psychology students performed well at either A or AS level in 2012. A new head of sixth form started the school last year and some improvements have been noted according to school data, including an increase in achievement at Advanced level for girls and a change to the curriculum offer for lower ability students.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate as many students do not make the progress they should. This applies in many subject areas and for all age groups, including the sixth form.
- More than half of all teaching observed during the inspection was less than good. A regular diet of sub-standard lessons has led to student underachievement and contributed to a decline in some students' behaviour.
- A lack of fundamental knowledge about what leads to student progress was apparent in some lessons, even when the teachers' subject knowledge was good.
- Some teachers did not act on their students' ability levels. Teachers often produce lists with different levels on for students and even have students' levels on the front covers of exercise books but too many then give exactly the same task to everyone regardless. This means that the most-able and least-able students are not properly catered for.
- Students, especially the most-able, are not challenged enough. In one sixth form lesson, students spent a considerable time cutting items from a sheet and sticking them to a different sheet and labelling them. This was in a lesson where the teacher clearly had specialist knowledge. This approach was indicative of the lack of genuine challenge offered in some lessons, even when the teachers clearly knew their subject.
- The level of questioning seen in some lessons did not promote progress. Some teachers talked at length and worked harder than their students. Questions varied in quality and sometimes students were not given sufficient time to think or the opportunity to respond properly.

- The three above areas for development (meeting the needs of individual students; increasing challenge for the most-able students; improving questioning) were priorities from the school's previous inspection report. The fact they remain so is indicative of the lack of progress made in the quality of teaching in the school and the failure of the school's leadership to address these issues.
- The marking of students' work was variable. Whilst examples were seen of constructive comments which helped students understand what they needed to do to improve, this was not common. Marking is not being carried out often enough and, when it is, it is not consistently comprehensive enough to help students to make progress.
- The teaching of mathematics and literacy is not consistent across the school. The school's librarian takes the time to prepare themed book boxes for use in tutor time. Not all teachers take advantage of this valuable opportunity to promote wider reading.
- Some of the school's classrooms aren't attractive environments for learning. A few teachers have made the best of what they have by creating attractive and informative displays; however, too many rooms were dull and provided little visual stimulus.
- There is some good practice in the school. An outstanding French lesson was seen in which students were constantly engaged in activities which promoted progress. One successful student said proudly, "My teacher says I need an extra challenge." Examples of good teaching were seen in various subjects, even in science where student underachievement is chronic.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The poor behaviour of a few students reflects badly on the school and the effectiveness of its behaviour management systems. More importantly, it affects the learning and, on rare occasions, the attitudes of otherwise well-behaved students.
- Most students are well-behaved and get on well with their teachers and with each other.
- Students' attitudes to learning are not consistently positive and this affects the progress they make. The students are not helped in this by having to endure a large proportion of lessons which are less than good.
- Behaviour is not managed consistently by staff. Excellent behaviour management was seen in a potentially very challenging lesson with students of low-ability but in another lesson in the same subject area with the same year group, a teacher did not adequately address the poor behaviour of a small number of students. As a result, a potentially good lesson was spoiled and learning was impaired.
- Incidents of bullying in all its forms are reducing. The school has a strong anti-bullying ethos which is supported by students who have volunteered to become 'Anti-Bullying Ambassadors'. A work of art on a prominent wall reflects the school's commitment to this initiative.
- Students feel safe and secure on the school site. They know who to go to if they have concerns about any issue.
- Although only a relatively small number of parents offered their views about the school during the inspection, half of them felt that behaviour in the school was not good.

- Rates of exclusion are too high. However, rather than it being many students, a significant proportion is made up of repeat offenders. The practice of using fixed-term exclusions is not working for these students. There are examples of students in the school whose behaviour has improved because of support offered.
- Attendance was improving but declined slightly in the previous academic year. The acting headteacher is taking concerted action to improve pupils' attendance. This is already having a positive impact on reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school.

The leadership and management are inadequate

The leadership and management of the school are inadequate because the headteacher and other leaders have failed to bring about the necessary improvements in teaching and, therefore, students are underachieving. Whilst the percentage of students achieving 5 GCSEs including English and mathematics rose very impressively in 2012, this has proved unsustainable and has fallen markedly in 2013. Even the higher figure masked significant underachievement elsewhere, particularly in science, humanities and languages, as well as the sixth form. Several key priorities from the previous inspection report remain unaddressed.

- The performance management of staff is inadequate. A system is in place but there is no transparent or systematic whole-school approach. Some teachers have been approved for pay progression, others not but there was insufficient evidence that these progressions are based on merit.
- There is no clear evidence that Pupil Premium funding or Year 7 catch-up funding has been used to benefit the students it was intended for and raise their achievement.
- The curriculum has been inadequate as it has not catered for the most-able students in the main school or the least able in the sixth form. However, changes have been made to address this. The school has a long-standing arrangement with Alfreton Vocational Academy to allow a small number of students to attend for some lessons as part of its efforts to enhance the opportunities available to them. However, the curriculum for science in the main school is inadequate. There is not enough emphasis on regular, high quality practical work; the level of challenge is too low and the same work is repeated in later years.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. In better lessons students have the opportunity to reflect and consider their spiritual development and this is supported by a programme of assemblies and Personal Social and Health education. Students work well with each other generally and show consideration. The school's specialism of visual and performing arts, combined with a variety of extra-curricular activities, make a genuine and positive addition to the cultural life of the school through concerts and other performances, some of which involve linking with local primary schools. The students appreciate the extra time spent by the teachers who offer or help with extra-curricular activities.
- Leadership of the sixth form has been inadequate. Until September 2012, leadership in this area was practically non-existent as there was no post holder. This contributed to the inadequate achievement of the sixth form. The new leader in charge of this area has brought energy to the role and has begun to have an impact, particularly in the creation of new curriculum pathways which are more suited to learners' individual needs. Students have increasing confidence in the leadership of this phase but, as yet, there is limited evidence that achievement is improving overall.

- The school's systems for offering independent information, advice and guidance to students are inadequate. This has led to students being badly advised – or not advised at all – in terms of their progression after Year 11. As a result, many students have wasted one or two years by attending unsuitable sixth form courses and either failing or not completing them. There is a more coherent strategy being put in place for the main school but it is too early for it to have had an impact.
- The appointment of an acting headteacher has resulted in a distinct improvement in staff morale, which was previously low. The acting headteacher is fully aware of the issues facing the school. Many staff, including several members of the senior leadership team, have left the school in the last year adding to what was already a difficult situation. The acting headteacher is determined to improve the school and has several sensible plans to improve key areas of performance though, at this early stage, it is not possible to see any impact.
- The local authority has visited the school several times. The representative interviewed was well-informed about the performance of the school. The local authority has very recently arranged practical support, one example being the secondment of an experienced senior leader for two days a week to support the acting headteacher.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet statutory requirements.
- The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors know about the school's performance and the issues they face. They have suffered from a lack of accurate data, despite requesting information about performance management and the quality of teaching on several occasions. The governors interviewed all support the acting headteacher and they are completely committed to ensuring the best outcomes for the school's students.

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	112931
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	425049

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	653
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	74
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mary Kerry
Headteacher	Gail Giles
Date of previous school inspection	28 November 2011
Telephone number	01773 832331
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