

Trinity School

8 Station Road, Foxton, CB22 6SA

Inspection dates

22–23 October 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 | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| 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 achieve well enough. More-able students, particularly, do not always have work that challenges them sufficiently.
- Teaching varies. Assessments of students' skills are not routinely used to plan demanding work. Students are often given too much help which does not help them to become independent learners.
- The sixth form requires improvement. It has only been running for a few weeks. All education is provided off-site and its impact on students' achievement has not yet been evaluated.
- Information on students' attainment and progress over the past year has been unreliable. It has not been used well enough to identify how well students are doing or to provide appropriate additional support where required.
- Students' behaviour is inconsistent. Behaviour on the Fenland site is not always managed well.
- Behavioural incidents are recorded differently between sites. There is not enough evaluation of these records to focus action on where it is most needed.
- The sites operate too separately. Policies and practices are not consistently applied over the three sites which prevent a clear, whole-school approach.
- Members of the governing body do not work closely enough together to have a significant impact on outcomes for students.
- The range of subjects and activities provided is somewhat narrow.

The school has the following strengths

- The executive headteacher has a clear vision for the school's success. Many helpful systems and practices have been introduced and are starting to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- Students feel safe in school. Their attitudes to learning are generally good and sometimes excellent. Their relationships with staff are usually good.
- The school has developed and improved considerably in the past year, and its capacity to continue to do so is increasing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 18 lessons or parts of lessons over the three sites. Some of these were carried out jointly with the assistant headteacher of each site. In addition, inspectors observed a breakfast club, lunchtimes and a 'catch-up' literacy session.
- Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the three assistant headteachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. Informal discussions were held with students.
- There were too few responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents and carers, to be shown. Two letters from parents sent to the inspection team and the outcome of the school's own survey of parents' and carers' views were taken into account.
- A range of documents was scrutinised. These included records of pupils' attainment and progress, the school's records of the quality of teaching and staff's targets, records of pupils' behavioural incidents and rewards, and a range of information about the management of the school.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Judith Charlesworth, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Philippa Holliday | Additional Inspector |
| Fatiha Maitland | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Trinity School provides for up to 105 students from the whole of Cambridgeshire. The school is situated on three sites situated very far from one another. They are located in Foxton near Cambridge (the Foxton site), in Hartford near Huntingdon (the Hartford site), and in Wisbech (the Fenland site).
- All students have statements of special educational needs for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some have additional problems, such as moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.
- Trinity was formed from an amalgamation of three learners' centres run by the local authority. The learners' centres worked independently of one another and none has ever been inspected by Ofsted.
- Trinity opened in September 2012 under the leadership of the executive headteacher. The staff and students of the learners' centres all transferred to the new school.
- A very small sixth form was established in September 2013 on two of the sites. These students' education is entirely provided through alternative off-site provision, arranged by the school. Alternative provision is also used for a few students in Key Stage 4. The alternative provision used is: Huntingdon Regional College, Cambridgeshire Regional College, Alternative Curriculum Education (ACE) at Peterborough, Sandlewood Farm, the National Teaching and Advisory Service commissioned by the Cambridge statutory assessment team, InterHigh (an online GCSE programme), K9 at Soham (animal care) and the Fenland Equestrian Centre.
- A larger proportion of students than average is eligible for the pupil premium. This is additional government funding for certain groups of pupils, including those who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority. This is the first academic year that information on pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has been available. Previously, the learners' centres provided all pupils with free meals and parents and carers were not asked to pay or claim for them.
- Support is currently provided to subject leaders by specialist leaders in education from the Cambridgeshire Teaching School Network.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by making sure that:
 - students have more independence and responsibility for their own learning by staff not doing too much, or providing too much, for them
 - the pace of lessons is not too slow, or the content too easy, so that students remain interested and well behaved and do not lose concentration
 - marking is regular and helps students to understand how to improve their work and learning.
- Improve students' achievement by:
 - using accurate assessment information to set demanding targets for all abilities, provide suitable levels of accreditation, and inform teachers' planning for all students' progress
 - analysing assessment information to identify how well different groups of students are performing and provide interventions where required.
- Improve students' behaviour and safety by:
 - developing absolute consistency of behaviour management and the recording of incidents

across the three sites

- analysing records of behavioural incidents more closely so that action can be focused on where it is most needed.

■ Improve leadership and management by:

- developing a more cohesive approach to the leadership and management of the school across all three sites, including governance, and helping staff and governors to recognise the need for positive change
- improving the range of subjects provided at each key stage, ensuring that they are all properly planned, implemented, monitored and evaluated
- evaluating the impact of the sixth-formers' off-site education on their achievement.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' achievement requires improvement because there is not enough consistently good teaching to ensure good, sustained progress for all. Assessments of students' skills are not routinely used to provide work that meets students' differing needs and to set them demanding targets. The school has not yet evaluated the impact of the sixth formers' off-site education on their achievement as it has only been running for a few weeks.
- Students did not transfer to the school from the learners' centres with an accurate assessment of their skill levels to use as a baseline from which to judge progress. Staff were not familiar enough with how to judge skills, knowledge and understanding against National Curriculum levels. The first system for recording and tracking attainment and progress was discarded part-way through the year in favour of a different system which staff find easier to use. At the end of its first year, therefore, the school was hampered in analysing achievement reliably to determine its own effectiveness and that of the support provided for some individuals.
- Nevertheless, the staff understand students' general capabilities and effective additional support is provided for those who are less able or who are very behind. More-able students, though, are not always given demanding enough work and so do not make as much progress as they could. The assessment and tracking of students' attainment and progress are now improved due to the introduction of a better recording system and effective training.
- The school focuses well on providing support to improve students' literacy and numeracy skills so that they make up for lost time and are better equipped for life after school. Most students' literacy improves at a faster rate as a result. However, they are sometimes not given enough opportunity to use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.
- At the end of last year, most students gained accreditation at some level, including GCSE, although accreditation does not always aim high enough for some more-able students. Almost all students went on to college to continue their education, and a few went to work. A very small number left school without a place in education, work or training due to their particular circumstances.
- Students' progress in lessons is often good. This is confirmed by some students' work, by inspection observations and by observations made by senior leaders and the local authority. In the most effective lessons, students build on work they have done previously and show great satisfaction in their own success. This is usually reflected in very positive attitudes.
- Last year, the school was allocated a token amount of pupil-premium funding as students eligible for free school meals had not been identified. The money contributed to providing additional support for small groups and individuals who were particularly behind in literacy and numeracy. Eligible students have now been identified, and this year's pupil premium and the government's Year 7 catch-up allowance have been allocated to give individuals support for literacy, numeracy and aspects of personal development. The impact of this expenditure has yet to be measured.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching requires improvement because it varies too much. Not all teachers have the skills and experience needed to help students make consistently good or better progress.

- There are common weaknesses in less effective lessons, although in contrast, these are also notable strengths when teaching is good. Nevertheless, assessment information is not used routinely to plan work that meets individuals' particular needs. This especially affects the more-able students whose work is not always challenging enough to help them make the progress of which they are capable. Marking does not always tell students how to improve their work.
- The pace of weaker lessons tends to be slow, which loses students' interest and sometimes results in inappropriate behaviour. Students are sometimes not given enough independence or opportunity to work things out for themselves. For example, students of widely differing ability were given an information sheet in a lesson on heraldry. This was very useful to the lower ability students, but unnecessary for the more-able students who were capable of remembering the symbolism and looking up anything they had forgotten for themselves.
- Weaknesses in teaching were identified by the executive headteacher and local authority soon after the school opened. Numerous measures were taken to improve teaching and learning. These are having a positive effect. Records show that over the course of last year, teaching on all sites improved steadily. Much is now good, and students' progress is improving as a result.
- In the more effective lessons, assessments are used to plan learning objectives for each student. These are carefully spelled out so they know exactly what they are aiming for and whether they have succeeded. Helpful resources are prepared to support students' learning. An excellent example of this was seen in a lesson on symmetry for two groups of pupils of differing ability, one of whom worked on problems from a text book while the other folded shapes to determine symmetry.
- In the better lessons, students are encouraged to produce written work that involves complex ideas of their own, and to explain their thinking to others without being over-supported. They have plenty of opportunity to use their literacy and numeracy skills, as seen when students used their mathematical skills in a science lesson on testing the strength of different fibres. The pace of lessons is fast, exciting and packed with information which students find interesting and motivating. Students' attitudes to learning in such lessons are usually excellent.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour is not good enough. On the Foxton and Hartford sites it is often good. However, on the Fenland site, a small number of students can affect the behaviour and learning of others. This was evident during the inspection. Not enough action is being taken over this.
- Students generally respond well to the school's behaviour management, reward and sanction systems. One student exclaimed happily to an assistant head teacher that he had achieved several 'merits' and was very pleased with himself. However, inconsistencies in the application of these systems across the sites contribute to the differences in overall behaviour between them.
- Behaviour incidents are not yet well enough analysed to pinpoint where to focus action for improvement, and there are no clear instructions about what exactly should be recorded. Nevertheless, records show that incidents of bullying are significantly reduced in comparison to the same time last year because this has been a particular focus of the school's 'Restorative Practice' approach.
- Relationships with staff are good and they understand each student's strengths and needs very well. Students say they feel safe at school and there are adequate procedures to help them stay safe.

- Students' attitudes to learning in lessons are usually good and sometimes outstanding. They are at their best when they are fully engaged by relevant, interesting work and good teaching. This was observed on all three sites. When teaching is less good, however, students sometimes lose interest.
- Attendance last year was well below the national average. Good systems have been implemented to improve attendance, including close monitoring, immediate action on non-attendance, and the setting of attendance targets for each student which are reviewed with them weekly. These are having a positive effect and attendance is improving. Records show that the attendance of almost two thirds of students who have been at Trinity since it first opened has improved.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Policies and procedures are not uniformly applied across the school. There are too many differences in understanding and implementation of school practices between the three sites, which still operate too separately. There is a lack of a cohesive whole-school team approach. The distance between locations is a large contributory factor in this as staff do not have enough opportunity to meet and work together in person. Other methods, including 'virtual' meetings, have been established to help overcome this problem.
- A great deal has been achieved in one year, amid very significant difficulties, but nevertheless weaknesses remain. All of these are understood by the executive headteacher, most of the senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority, and form part of this year's action plan for improvement.
- Each assistant headteacher has been tasked with improving achievement and behaviour on their site which has helped to develop their leadership and management skills and those of their staff. New, rigorous targets set for senior leaders and the teaching staff link together effectively to support improvement in students' outcomes.
- Not all staff were fully committed to the vision and ambition of the executive headteacher and local authority which contributed to difficulties early in the school's life. These have now mostly been ironed out.
- A suitable system is now established to monitor students' progress and enable staff to set challenging targets for achievement. Staff are more secure in understanding how to judge students' levels of attainment since they were at the start of the year. More reliable checking of students' attainment and progress has now begun, including that of students supported by the pupil premium and those receiving specific interventions to improve their progress.
- A great deal has been done to improve the quality of teaching and students' learning. Training and support have been provided to improve teachers' planning and focus lessons on promoting learning and progress. Detailed records show that this is having a positive effect and the quality of teaching is improving term on term.
- The range of subjects provided is too narrow. Music and a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3 and religious education at Key Stage 4 are not appropriately planned for. Accreditation is not sufficiently demanding for more-able students, although some changes have already been made for the start of this year. The school has identified that it needs to develop work-related courses for students at Key Stage 4, but the school's facilities are limited, particularly at the Hartford site. A move from Hartford to a new building has just been agreed which will help

establish better provision for work-related education.

- Students receive suitable advice and guidance about further education and work after they leave school. This is given by independent external advisers who provide individual support and attend relevant meetings. The very small sixth-form's education is conducted off-site through alternative provision. Although students' safety, attendance and well-being are closely checked by regular visits and phone calls, the provision is not separately led and has not yet been evaluated.
- The school has good links with parents and carers and takes account of their views. The school's own survey was positive and has led to better sharing of information on students' progress with parents and carers through the newly introduced termly progress plans.
- The local authority has provided extensive support for Trinity and the executive headteacher since it opened. This has contributed significantly to improvement over its first year. Support is reflected in a detailed plan to support improvement over the course of this academic year.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Too much responsibility rests on the work and expertise of the Chair. She makes sure that statutory duties are met, including those to safeguard students. She provides constructive challenge about the performance of the school and staff based on her knowledge and understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and she supports other governors' understanding in meetings. However, other members of the governing body do not have the same depth of understanding and do not provide enough support for its work.
- The governing body is informed about the quality of teaching through reports from the executive headteacher and its role in dealing with disciplinary and other matters related to staff performance. It understands the link between good teaching and pay. Governors know that the targets set for staff's performance are much more rigorous this year and link to individuals' own skills and students' improved outcomes. Members are involved in discussions about students' achievement, but acknowledge that they need further training to do this better and to support the Chair in holding the leaders to account for the school's performance and continued improvement.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 137494 |
| Local authority | Cambridgeshire |
| Inspection number | 425151 |

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

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| Type of school | Special |
| School category | Community special |
| 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 | 74 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 5 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Gail Kenney |
| Headteacher | James Simon |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01223 712995 |
| Fax number | 01945 429176 |
| Email address | office@trinity.cambs.sch.uk |

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