

Ifield Community College

Crawley Avenue, Ifield, Crawley, RH11 0DB

Inspection dates

9–10 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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:

- The percentage of students attaining five GCSE A* to C grades including English and mathematics has been well below average and, despite improving in 2012, it has remained too low, for several years.
- The percentage of high GCSE grades is low. The most able students do reasonably well but too few achieve their potential.
- The college has not tackled the fact that boys do not do as well as girls.
- Standards were well below average in mathematics and science in 2013.
- In response to a sharp rise in unacceptable behaviour in some lessons last term, fixed-term exclusions were high and have not yet dropped enough. Attendance is below average.
- There is too little good teaching to generate the rapid progress students need to achieve standards close to those seen nationally.
- Some teachers fail to control behaviour well in lessons so learning deteriorates. Marking is inconsistent and only done really well by a minority of teachers.
- Senior leaders and managers have ensured that teaching and achievement are improving, despite the school being in a state of flux following the unexpected retirement of the previous Principal.
- Governors know they were ineffective in the past because they accepted the status quo and rarely challenged the college's performance. Their whole approach has changed but, in the meantime, their work requires improvement.

The school has the following strengths:

- The sixth form is good. Results are now close to average having improved steadily in recent years.
- Students achieve very well in most vocational subjects.
- Students with special educational needs, or who start school with low standards, and those who are eligible for additional funding, do relatively well compared with others.
- Students' personal development needs are supported extremely well. The care they receive is sensitive and effective.
- The performing and visual arts generate much enjoyment and success for many students. The choir is renowned for its performances.
- Increasingly effective middle leaders support the acting principal and senior leaders well.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection team observed 40 part-lessons, several of which were jointly observed with a member of the senior leadership team. Inspectors observed assemblies and tutor time in the mornings.
- Inspectors held meetings with several groups of students, members of the senior leadership team, leaders in charge of subjects and other aspects of the school's work, and other staff with positions of responsibility. The lead inspector met the Chair of the Governing Body, the vice chair and two other members of the governing body, and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors discussed lessons they had seen with teaching staff and examined a range of documents, including subject improvement plans and data about progress, standards, pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding, exclusions, attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors looked at a range of students' work in lessons.
- Inspectors took into account 17 parents' and carers' responses to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and questionnaires completed by over 50 members of staff.

Inspection team

Clare Gillies, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Michael Elson	Additional Inspector
Heather Leatt	Additional Inspector
David Smith	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The vice principal has been acting principal since September 2013. The previous Principal announced his retirement in June 2013.
- The school is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- About 70% of students are White British with an above-average percentage of students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Asian heritage students make up approximately 10% of the student population, with small percentages from several other groups.
- An above average proportion of students speak English as an additional language, of whom a very small number is at an early stage of learning English.
- An above average proportion of students is eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for specific groups including looked after children, students known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families. The school has a few looked after children and no children of service families.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs supported through school action is well above the national average. The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above average. The most common needs relate to behaviour, emotional and social difficulties and speech, language and communication needs.
- Just over 40 students are eligible for Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- The school uses alternative, off-site education provision at Central Sussex College in Crawley for a very few Key Stage 4 students.
- 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 so that it is typically at least good by:
 - helping those teachers who do not manage behaviour well to engage students better
 - insisting that students present their work neatly and that teachers mark it regularly, with detailed, constructive comments
 - ensuring that students are clear about what they are meant to be learning, particularly in Key Stage 3, so that students improve their concentration and motivation to learn
- Raise achievement to at least good by:
 - focusing on boys' progress so that they do better relative to girls
 - ensuring students, particularly the most able, achieve more high GCSE grades
 - developing greater consistency in the quality of learning in mathematics and science.
- Tackle any incidents of poor behaviour to reduce the number of exclusions, and improve attendance.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - tackling key improvement areas as fast as possible
 - improving professional development for all teachers and staff
 - helping governors to support the school and to get to know exactly what the key issues are.
- 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

- Achievement requires improvement because the well-below-average GCSE results in 2013 have not improved enough over time. The gap between the college's results and the national averages has increased. In the past, the most able students significantly underachieved. Their results were better in 2013 but they and other students attained a low percentage of high grades.
- In GCSEs in 2013, less than one third of boys attained five A* to C grades including English and mathematics and the gap between their results and girls' widened, particularly in English.
- Girls also achieve better than boys in the sixth form. In all years, minority ethnic students, particularly those of Asian heritage, do better than White British students.
- After declining in 2012, English and mathematics results recovered in 2013 although they remained below average; several students failed to attain grade C or higher in both subjects. GCSE results, and the progress students made, were well below average in science, history and Spanish.
- The college achieves a high percentage of distinctions in several BTEC courses. However, these vocational courses do not give students the skills and depth of knowledge to cope with some sixth form academic subjects. The acting principal has changed the college's policy on BTECs so fewer students are taking them.
- Students are not entered early for any GCSEs. In 2013, the gap between the results of pupil premium funded students and others' narrowed to two thirds of a GCSE grade lower in English and one grade lower in mathematics. In Years 7 and 8 the gaps are much smaller.
- In 2013 practically all students, especially low attainers, made good progress by the end of Year 11 in English and mathematics. Pupil premium funded students made close to the same progress as others in English and only a bit less in mathematics. Disabled students and those with special educational needs also made relatively good progress and most attained standards exceeding national figures for similar students.
- Students attending off-site provision make good progress. Following vocational courses that suit their abilities and interest, they attend regularly and behave well.
- Students in the sixth form make good progress from low starting points. They do particularly well in vocational courses, especially business and law. They achieve slightly better at AS than at A level.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Key areas requiring improvement are when teachers are not strict about behaviour or accept poorly presented work. Students report that lessons have too much 'chatter and arguing', with teachers shouting and/or failing to get order. On rare occasions, even enthusiastic teachers who have prepared really interesting lessons cannot always gain students' attention.
- Students know which teachers mark their work regularly and helpfully and confirm that marking varies within and between subjects. If teachers write comments, they rarely give students time to respond to the advice and so improvement is not well promoted. Marking ranges from nothing or simple ticks to constructive suggestions and advice.
- Learning requires improvement when students cannot see the point of what they doing or when they find the work too difficult or too easy. On occasions, a few students could not tackle the work set because they were at an early stage of learning English and could not understand it.

- Most-able students are almost always taught in top sets and there is evidence that teachers are pushing them harder this year.
- In effective lessons, students are keen to learn and join in enthusiastically. Teachers check their learning regularly (often using mini whiteboards), ask probing questions, plan interesting activities and use the interactive whiteboards imaginatively.
- A focus on extending students' vocabulary and improving their writing in all subjects is emerging although subject-specific words are not always explored in detail. Literacy and numeracy are taught well in many of the one-to-one and small-group sessions, mostly paid for with pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding.
- Students rightly observed that there is more good teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in the lower years. Teaching is consistently good in the sixth form, having improved since the last inspection. Sixth form students say their teachers 'go the extra mile' and are 'dedicated'.

The behaviour and safety of pupils require improvement

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because, in a minority of lessons (not only in lower sets or taught by supply teachers), students are chatty and do not pay attention. Some do not care about how well they present their work or bring the right equipment to lessons.
- The college has tackled this poor behaviour firmly with internal or external exclusions. These are working although their number is still high.
- Students' behaviour outside lessons is generally good. They are polite and the atmosphere is calm. They wear their uniform smartly. The building looks as good as new and students respect it. They are happy and enjoy college life. The college fosters harmonious relationships. Sixth form students are excellent role models.
- Attendance requires improvement because it was well below average last year, with high levels of persistent absence. Both have got better with tighter systems and firmer actions but there is still work to be done. Attendance in the sixth form is good.
- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Through citizenship and computing lessons they are made fully aware of the potential dangers of modern technology, such as careless use of internet sites.
- Students feel that bullying is rare and dealt with promptly if it happens. They are alert to homophobic or racist bullying and Year 11 students said that students who had 'come out' were totally accepted, and they know the college does not tolerate discrimination. The college was fully involved in the Crawley Campaign against racism.
- The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has a high profile. Assemblies, an enrichment week, watching the news in tutor time, citizenship lessons, involvement with the local community and opportunities to take on positions of responsibility, all contribute to students' preparation for future life and consideration of others. Sixth form students are expected to do community service.
- Students receive good careers advice and guidance. Half of Year 11 students move on to local colleges, some to apprenticeships and almost one in 10 go straight into employment.
- The sixth form is inclusive. Reflecting the college's focus on equality of opportunity for all it welcomes students of all abilities, including a few from other schools. Retention between Years 12 and 13 has gone up and is now close to average.
- The college supports those who wish to have work experience built in to their study programmes and takes great care to ensure students follow worthwhile courses that will lead to success in their futures. As at the end of Year 11, only a small number of students do not move on to education, employment or training. The number proceeding to university is increasing.

The leadership and management require improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because many staff felt adrift following the unexpected change of leadership. The difference in the college's atmosphere contributed to a rise in unacceptable behaviour, which affected the quality of teaching and students' progress.
- Not all staff have mastered a recently introduced data system; they do not have information about students' individual needs at their finger tips. Analysis of progress by groups has not identified that boys are not doing as well as girls.
- Senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching and learning accurately but this was not always the case; some weak teaching remains. The link between the outcomes of teachers' appraisal and their future targets is not always tight.
- Continuing professional development requires improvement as teachers have had little contact with other schools or teachers. Improved access to training, for support staff too, is underway but it has not yet had an impact on students' progress.
- Members of the senior leadership team have worked diligently together to get the college back on track. They have tackled many areas for improvement but it takes time for them to generate better learning and faster progress. Senior leaders know exactly where they are heading and have a secure capacity to keep improving things.
- Leadership of the sixth form is good and has improved in the last couple of years. Subject leaders feel well supported and are increasingly confident in their roles. They know that they must monitor teaching more rigorously and generate greater consistency. Subject leaders are more involved with interventions in younger years.
- Pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up funding has been spent carefully on a mixture of one-to-one and small-group teaching. The English subject leader has ensured that reading has a high profile. Work to make all teachers promote literacy is beginning to be evident in lessons.
- Pupil premium funding also contributes towards the excellent academic and pastoral care for disabled students and those with special educational needs and those who are disadvantaged or have social and behavioural issues. Pastoral leaders and managers prepare the best possible package of 'solution-focused' strategies. Their work has made a positive difference to many students' confidence and ability to cope with work and to succeed.
- External support for students, and occasionally parents and carers, is sought whenever needed. Parents and carers of students in a Year 7 nurture group are fully involved in their children's progress. Almost all parents or carers who responded to Parent View said they would recommend the college to others.
- The local authority was not involved with the college much before September 2013. A senior adviser is now supporting the acting principal.
- More Key Stage 4 students are following an academic pathway. Science is being promoted with parents, carers and students; all students are now taking the separate sciences. Strengths within the curriculum are the performing and creative arts, citizenship and the wide range of trips, visits and after-school clubs and sports.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors mostly rubber-stamped decisions in the past and rarely probed the limited amount of information they received. They had little insight into the college's standards, progress or the quality of teaching and learning.
 - Since September 2013, governors have rapidly moved into a higher gear and become proactive. Underway are changes to the committees and meetings and the monitoring of value for money and leaders' accountability. They ratified a new pay policy in January 2014, which links teachers' performance with their salaries.
 - Safeguarding and child protection arrangements have been tightened up in the last few months. More members of staff are being trained as designated child protection officers.

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	126071
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	430534

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
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	1,057
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	183
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Tony Milborrow
Headteacher	Richard Cowper
Date of previous school inspection	25–26 January 2012
Telephone number	01293 420500
Fax number	01293 420501
Email address	office@ifieldcc.co.uk

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