

Fearn Community Sports College

Fearn Moss, Stacksteads, Bacup, Lancashire, OL13 0TG

Inspection dates

30 April–1 May 2014

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		Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Achievement is inadequate. The number of students leaving the college at the end of Key Stage 4 with at least five high grade GCSEs including English and mathematics has been significantly below average for the past three years.
- The college's policy of entering students early for GCSE mathematics has been a key factor in students' underachievement in this subject.
- The quality of teaching in a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, has not been good enough to secure the necessary improvements in students' attainment and progress since the previous inspection. This is particularly the case for students known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The marking of students' work is inconsistent. Consequently teachers' assessments of students' progress, in some subjects, is unreliable.
- A minority of students disturb the learning of their peers and demonstrate a lack of courtesy towards other students and their teachers.
- The number of learning days lost to fixed-term exclusion, although reducing, is substantially above the national average.
- The attendance rate of students entitled to free school meals is well below average at Key Stage 4.
- Senior leaders and governors have been unsuccessful in improving the quality of teaching and raising achievement since the previous inspection. Their evaluation of how well the college is doing is too generous and the impact of the pupil premium has not been evaluated.
- Over time, performance management has not been rigorous enough to improve the quality of teaching and hold teachers effectively to account for the standards achieved by their students.

The school has the following strengths

- Consistently good quality teaching, learning and achievement in science, religious studies and modern foreign languages.
- The good support for students with special educational needs.
- The effective care, guidance and support for students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- The college makes sure that students are safe and secure.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 21 part-lessons taught by 21 different teachers. Three of those lessons were jointly observed with members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed one assembly and students' interactions during one morning break.
- Meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team including the headteacher and deputy headteachers, a group of governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, the special educational needs co-ordinator and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also met with groups of teachers and groups of students of different ages. The lead inspector also held a telephone conversation with a parent.
- Students' work was scrutinised, as were college policies. The college's evaluation of how well it is doing was examined as well as the college improvement plan. Inspectors also analysed the college's records of students' attendance and behaviour and assessed whether the evidence of the checks made by senior leaders on the suitability of adults to work with young people meet statutory requirements. Senior leaders' records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and data showing students' current attainment and progress were also inspected.
- In the last year too few parents have used Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View), to express their opinions about the college and so inspectors relied on the results of the college's own parent surveys. Inspectors also took into account the opinions of 24 college employees who returned the Ofsted staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Charles Lowry, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Mary Lanovoy-Taylor

Additional Inspector

Johan MacKinnon

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 44 of the Education Act 2005 (as amended), 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

- Fearn Community Sports College is a smaller than average, mixed, 11-16 comprehensive school in Bacup, Lancashire, about eight miles south of Burnley town centre.
- The proportion of students supported by the pupil premium is above the national average.
- The pupil premium is additional funding the college receives to support students known to be eligible for free school meals, students from service families and those students looked after by the local authority.
- Almost all students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The numbers of students with special educational needs and who are supported at school action, school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs are below average.
- The proportion of students who join and leave the college at times other than the start and end of the academic year is above average.
- Eight students who are registered students of the college receive some or all of their education at other establishments. These include Accrington and Rossendale College, Oswaldtwistle School and the Alternative School.
- The college does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching, particularly in English and mathematics, so that it is at least consistently good across the college by:
 - making sure that teachers use the information they have on students' capability and progress to raise expectations, plan activities to meet their needs, fire their enthusiasm and give purpose to their learning
 - ensuring that teachers check students' understanding before they move on to the next activity, thereby making sure that the pace of teaching matches the pace of students' learning
 - develop teachers' questioning skills so that students are made to think hard about their learning, deepen their understanding and provide extended answers in order to develop their speaking and listening skills
 - making sure that all subjects, as appropriate, make an effective contribution to developing students' literacy and numeracy skills
 - bringing all marking in the college up to the standard of the best; making sure all teachers mark students' work regularly, that the feedback they give is effective in accelerating students' progress and provides a reliable indicator of students' achievement.

- Increase the proportion of students leaving the college with five or more high grade GCSEs including English and mathematics so that it meets, at least, the government's minimum expectation for attainment by:
 - making sure that all groups of students, including those eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority make good or better progress
- Improve students' behaviour by:
 - reducing low-level disruption in lessons so that learning time for all students is maximised
 - reinforcing the need for all students to show respect and courtesy towards each other and their teachers
 - continuing to implement strategies to reduce the number of exclusions and improve attendance, particularly of students supported by the pupil premium at Key Stage 4.
- Urgently improve the impact of leadership and management in raising achievement and improving the quality of teaching by:
 - making sure that senior leaders' and governors' evaluation of how well the college is doing takes account of all aspects of the college's work in order to provide an accurate picture of performance and inform the priorities in the improvement plan
 - using performance management rigorously to improve the quality of teaching and hold staff robustly to account for the standards achieved by students
 - sharing the good practice of high performing middle leaders with their colleagues in order to drive up the quality of leadership and management across the college
 - carrying out an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved
 - undertaking a review of the college's use of the pupil premium in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Ofsted will make recommendations on governance to the authority responsible for the college.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- The number of students leaving Key Stage 4 with five high grade passes at GCSE including English and mathematics has been significantly below average for the past three years. In 2011 and 2013 this attainment indicator was below the government's minimum expectations for students' results at GCSE.
- In 2013, and taking students' results as a whole, most groups of students significantly under attained when compared to their peers across the country. The largest gap in attainment was for high-ability students.
- Compared to their peers nationally, students left the college about one and a half GCSE grades behind in English and mathematics. This gap grew to two grades in both subjects for students known to be eligible for free school meals. However, as a result of the good support that they receive, students supported at school action or who have a statement of special educational needs made better progress than that of their peers in the college.
- Given students' starting points, the progress made by students, including those that join and leave the college at times other than the start and end of the academic year, has been significantly below expectations for the last three years. In 2013 expected progress in English was 40 percentage points below the national average and 27 percentage points below in mathematics. Students' below average progress in mathematics is a consequence of the college's policy of entering students for GCSE before they are ready. Senior leaders have revised this policy and the college will no longer enter students early in this subject.
- Although the college's current data indicate that students' progress is now improving in both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4, inspection evidence shows that the rate of improvement is not fast enough to overcome the legacy of underachievement, particularly in English and mathematics.
- Those students who attend other provision for some or all of their education are regularly monitored and their progress tracked every half-term. Students at Key Stage 3 make progress in line with their targets, whereas students at Key Stage 4 underachieve. This is due mainly to their weak attendance.
- As a result of consistently good teaching in science, students' attainment and progress at GCSE is at least in line with national averages for all groups of students and well above for the majority. This includes girls and students of middle and low ability. Although the attainment and progress of students known to be eligible for free school meals, in science, are slightly lower than those of their peers in the college, the gap is narrower than that found nationally.
- Students entered for GCSE qualifications in modern foreign languages and religious studies, in 2013, made good progress. The college has directed 'catch-up' funding effectively to accelerate Year 7 students' progress in literacy and numeracy. Catch-up funding is extra finance the college receives to provide additional support in English and mathematics for those students who start Key Stage 3 below Level 4.
- When the college canvassed parents' opinions, most agreed that their child was making good progress. Although inspectors would agree that this is the case for religious studies, science and modern foreign languages, inspection evidence would not support this view for a number of other subjects, particularly English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- The quality of teaching over time, in a number of subjects, including English and mathematics, has led to students making weak progress and consequently underachieving.
- Evidence from lesson observations and work in students' books indicate that sometimes teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are inappropriate. They do not take enough account of students' level of understanding when planning activities. As a result the degree of challenge for the most-able students is often not high enough and the work too difficult for

students of lower ability. This leads to slow progress for both groups.

- In some lessons teachers do not check students' understanding of the work before moving on to the next topic. As a result the pace of teaching does not match students' pace of learning. Consequently, students find it difficult to apply what they have learned in tackling the next activity. This leads to some students disengaging, becoming bored, restless and disrupting the learning of others.
- In some lessons, for example in religious studies and science, teachers' questions challenge students, making them think hard, provide detailed answers and so deepen their understanding. However, practice such as this is not consistent across the college. As a result, opportunities are missed for students to develop their understanding and use subject-specific vocabulary to help them improve their speaking and listening skills.
- The development of students' literacy across the curriculum has been a focus of the college's work and a priority for improvement. However, with the exception of religious studies, science and students supported by catch-up funding, there is little evidence of the impact of this development on students' reading, writing, speaking and listening skills beyond English lessons.
- With the exception of mathematics there is little evidence of the contribution that other subjects make to the development of students' numeracy.
- Where teachers mark students' work well, teachers' comments are effective in highlighting strengths and what needs to be improved, which students then act on. However, there are examples of marking which is unhelpful and of work in books which has not been evaluated by teachers for some time. Consequently, some books do not provide enough evidence to support teachers' assessments of students' progress.
- Those students spoken to by inspectors said they enjoy lessons where they have opportunities to be active, citing physical education and science as examples. However, they expressed the opinion that they found some teaching dull.
- Most parents who expressed an opinion felt that their child is well taught. Inspection evidence would support that this is the case in religious studies and science.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are inadequate

- The behaviour of students is inadequate.
- As a result of much teaching that is not closely enough matched to their needs, too many lessons are interrupted by a minority of students who engage in low-level disruptive behaviour, which disturbs the learning of everyone. To help minimise disruptive behaviour in lessons the college operates a 'time-out' system. However, time-out is not having enough impact in modifying the attitudes to learning of some students who are repeatedly removed from lessons. Nevertheless, students can and do behave well, engaging with their learning when teaching inspires them and teachers have high expectations.
- Students sometimes show a lack of courtesy towards other members of the college community and a small minority demonstrate a lack of respect for their teachers.
- College staff have put in place effective strategies to reduce the number of learning days lost to exclusion; nonetheless, rates of exclusion currently are still over four times the national average.
- Strategies to improve attendance have been effective with some groups of pupils. The current rate of attendance is now average, having been below average for the previous three years. However, rates of attendance of students entitled to free school meals at Key Stage 4 are well below average and this is having a negative impact on their attainment and progress and, ultimately, their results in public examinations.
- Conversations with students indicate they have a good understanding of the college's code of conduct and the system of rewards and sanctions. Students value the rewards they receive for good work and behaviour and in particular the college's rewards' trips.
- Students comply with the college's uniform policy and show respect for the college environment, which is litter and graffiti free.

- The majority of staff who responded to the questionnaire felt that behaviour is good in the college.
- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Those students who met inspectors said they feel safe and well cared for by the staff.
- The 'Diamond Centre' is valued by the students. They describe it as a safe haven, providing effective support particularly for those students whose circumstances may make them vulnerable.
- When asked, almost all students demonstrated a sound understanding of the different types of bullying including cyber, racist and other prejudice-based intimidating behaviour. These students also said that when bullying does occur, they are confident that it is dealt with effectively by members of staff. The college's commitment to making sure that students are safe from this type of behaviour is demonstrated by the appointment of 30 students as 'bullying ambassadors'. These ambassadors act as points of contact for students, should they experience relationship difficulties.

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Senior leaders, managers and the governing body have been unsuccessful in securing the essential improvements identified by inspectors at the previous inspection. Although attainment at GCSE increased in 2012, it weakened again in 2013. This is because improvements in the quality of teaching, evident in 2012, were not secure and, coupled with significant change in staffing, led to a decline in standards of classroom practice.
- Senior leaders are working hard to overcome the many challenges that the college faces; however, their evaluation of how well the college is doing is too generous, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching. As a result the priorities in the college development plan are not sharply focused on the key areas that will bring about the most rapid and sustained improvements in teachers' classroom practice and students' outcomes.
- Heads of subjects, with senior leaders, monitor the professional practice of teachers in their departments. They observe their colleagues' teaching regularly and scrutinise the work in students' books. The outcomes of these monitoring activities then feed into each teacher's development and support plan and informs their performance management objectives. Senior leaders encourage teachers to work together so that they can share their good practice. However, over time these activities have lacked rigour and consequently had insufficient impact on improving students' outcomes.
- Students' progress is monitored regularly. Senior leaders collect data on students' performance against their targets every term at Key Stage 3 and every half-term at Key Stage 4. The data are then used to identify those students who are off track and determine what support they will receive to help them get back on track. Although senior leaders collect a wealth of information on students' performance, their analysis of these data is not sufficiently evaluative to enable them to determine the impact of those measures to improve students' outcomes.
- The college curriculum is broad and balanced. Students have opportunities to study a range of academic and vocational subjects at Key Stage 4. However, poor teaching, leading to repeated underachievement, remains an obstacle to students fulfilling their potential. The curriculum does provide opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A range of residential trips help students' social development, group work in subjects like science provide opportunities for students to develop their team-working skills and they learn about other faiths in religious studies.
- The promotion of equal opportunities and tackling discrimination is ineffective because of the inconsistent achievement of the different groups of students in the college.
- Local authority staff have been supporting senior leaders in their drive to improve students' outcomes and to avoid a repeat of the decline in results that occurred in 2013. However, the steps taken to deal with the impact of staffing changes in English and mathematics have not

been rapid enough to reverse the decline that occurred, in both subjects, from 2012 to 2013.

- The head of science has taken effective steps to adjust the science curriculum so that it closely matches the needs and aspirations of the students. This, coupled with closely targeted support and training for science staff, has led to sustained improvements in the quality of science teaching and year-on-year gains in students' outcomes to significantly above the national average in 2013.

- The college may not appoint newly qualified teachers.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are under no illusions that standards of attainment and progress at the college and in particular, outcomes at Key Stage 4, were weak in 2013. They are aware that students' achievement in modern foreign languages, science and religious education are stronger than in other subjects but are not clear why. Although the college's current data are indicating that students' progress is beginning to speed up, they agree that there has been a lack of urgency in tackling key weaknesses in teaching and learning in the past. They now have a much more accurate picture of the quality of teaching in the college. As a result they are beginning to address weaknesses in performance management and have recently introduced much needed rigour, including linking performance management to pay progression. They have a good understanding of how the extra finance the college receives through the pupil premium and Year 7 catch-up grants is used. They are also clear about the effect that catch-up funding is having on improving Year 7 students' literacy, but are only just starting to investigate the impact of the pupil premium. Governors have ensured that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements.

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	119745
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	429995

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	504
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Styles
Headteacher	Nigel Dawson
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2012
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