

Aldercar Community Language College

Daltons Close, Langley Mill, Nottingham, NG16 4HL

Inspection dates 24–25 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The quality of teaching, while improving, is not consistently leading to the good progress of all groups of students.
- Not all teachers plan tasks that fully match the range of abilities within each class, or ensure that the most-able students are always stretched.
- The questions teachers ask in lessons are not consistently challenging enough to make students think deeply about their work.
- The balance of academic and work-based courses offered is not always matched well to students' ability so that they achieve their very best.
- The school is not promoting students' spiritual development sufficiently well, ensuring that they are fully prepared for life in modern Britain.
- While subject leaders are now sharing good practice and establishing high expectations for the quality of teaching, they are not yet holding teachers fully to account for the progress made by their students.
- Not enough of the more-able students are making expected progress in English and mathematics.

The school has the following strengths

- Students behave well in lessons, showing an eagerness to learn. They are polite and courteous to adults. Behaviour around the school, despite the extensive disruption caused by the building works, is calm and sensible.
- The school provides a caring environment enabling all groups of students, including those in the Enhanced Resource Facility, to feel safe.
- All groups of students enjoy mathematics and make good progress. Attainment in this subject is consistently above average.
- The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Good teaching is resulting in students achieving well on both work-related and academic courses. The course in construction is regarded as a model of good practice.
- The school is improving. The new Principal has very quickly communicated high expectations to galvanise staff and identified priorities for further improvement. The governing body and leadership team are working well together. They are already effecting improvements in teaching and achievement and building well on the improvements in progress in English driven through by the acting principal.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed students’ learning in 36 lessons across all year groups and most subjects, two of which were seen together with one of the school’s senior leaders. Short visits were also made to lessons and students’ English books were examined together with the head of department.
- Meetings were held with students, members of the governing body, staff, and a representative of the local authority.
- A British Sign Language interpreter accompanied the inspection team, supporting discussions with students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment.
- The inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at policies, the school’s own assessment of its strengths and weaknesses and its plans for development, minutes of meetings of the governing body, records of lesson observations, information about students’ progress, safeguarding documents, and samples of students’ work.
- The views of the 27 parents and carers who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. Inspectors also took individual communications from parents into account as well as the 30 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Mary Davis, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector
Arshad Ashraf	Additional Inspector
Vondra Mays	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- The school is below average in size for a secondary school.
- Most students are White British. The proportion of students from minority ethnic heritages is low. Virtually no students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is high. This includes students who are deaf, have a hearing impairment or physical disabilities.
- The school provides a delegated Enhanced Resource Facility (ERF) for those students who are deaf or who have a hearing impairment. It currently supports four students from Year 7 to Year 11. In addition two sixth form students with physical disabilities are supported through the ERF.
- The proportion of students supported through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals, is above average.
- A very few students follow part-time off-site alternative courses in music production, provided by 'Baby J.'
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. No current students achieved the highest levels in the Year 6 tests prior to entry and so the attainment and progress of the most able is not reported on in this report.
- The school is currently undergoing extensive work on its accommodation, including demolition of part of the existing building.
- The Principal took up his post in September 2014. The deputy principal has been acting principal since the previous inspection. There have recently been considerable changes in subject leadership and staffing. A new leader of English was appointed in September 2013.
- An external review of the governing body took place in June 2014 following its restructuring.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and progress for all groups of students by ensuring that all teachers consistently:
 - plan tasks that fully stretch more-able students, while ensuring that those of lower ability are sufficiently well supported
 - ask probing questions to check that students are not finding tasks too easy or too difficult, and to encourage students to think deeply about their work.
- Make subject leaders more effective by ensuring that they:
 - provide challenge and support to improve teaching within their areas of responsibility
 - require all staff to follow established school marking policies and check that this is happening
 - fully hold teachers to account for the progress made by their students.
- Improve the curriculum by:
 - giving all groups of students a suitable choice of courses so they are able to make good progress and achieve their potential as they move through to the sixth form
 - promoting students' spiritual development better, so they are fully prepared for life in modern Britain.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new Principal has been very quick to establish his high expectations of all staff and students, although these changes have not yet had enough impact. Staff express very positive views about his approachability and the openness with which he is making changes. This has raised morale. He has taken swift action to strengthen and support the work of middle leaders. In all this, he is well supported by the governing body and deputy principals, who had already begun to address the issues facing the school following its previous inspection and prior to the principal's appointment.
- Secure monitoring processes are now established to check the quality of teaching. Subject leaders are receiving training and support to ensure that they carry out their roles fully by tackling any teaching that requires improvement and holding teachers fully to account for the progress made by their students. There remains some inconsistency, however. A programme of subject reviews has been set up to challenge underperformance.
- The principal and governing body have recognised that the courses currently offered are not fully meeting the interests and abilities of all groups of students, especially at Key Stage 4. Too many students have been following work-related courses that provide the more able with insufficient challenge. An immediate curriculum review process is now being undertaken.
- Procedures to raise the quality of teaching and to identify and address training needs are now robust. Senior leaders have identified where teaching is weak, particularly within English and modern foreign languages, and are providing close support, including the sharing of good practice, from within the school and from local authority subject specialists. Secure processes for managing staff performance now ensure that teachers' targets relate to the school's priorities for development and, particularly, to students' progress. This was not previously the case.
- Leaders are promoting students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in some respects, for example through partnerships with students in Burundi and Japan. However, the students have limited opportunities to learn about world religions and cultural celebrations, or to discuss, reflect upon and form their own opinions about issues that face them. This includes opportunities to develop their understanding of their responsibilities as British citizens and their preparation for life in modern Britain.
- Students are set by ability in English, mathematics and science. Where the lowest-ability students are taught in small groups, they are well supported and gain the confidence to make good progress. In some subjects, however, students in other ability groups are not sufficiently challenged. It is not always recognised in teachers' planning that there may still be a wide ability range within a higher set. Leaders are not currently checking that these more-able students make sufficient progress or checking that disabled students and those with special educational needs make similar or better progress to others with similar starting points at the beginning of Year 7 nationally.
- Leaders, including governors, have recognised the need to analyse their use of the pupil premium more robustly to make sure it is helping to close achievement gaps. Money has been spent effectively on raising the attendance of eligible students, although it is still below that of other students.
- Literacy and numeracy are generally well promoted across the school. The additional support provided for students with low literacy and numeracy skills is however, sometimes insufficiently effective, because some students find it too easy. A very small number of students facing challenging circumstances are now attending alternative courses and great care is taken to check on their well-being, including their attendance.
- The new leader of the English department is now establishing his high expectations and sharing good practice across the school. Rates of progress are increasing in this subject.
- Leaders have decided to continue using National Curriculum levels in their assessments, but no decision has yet been made to explore alternative methods. Students are now entered for all their GCSE courses at

the end of Year 11.

- Leaders have ensured that the behaviour and safety of students remain strong and have improved attendance and punctuality further. The school ensures that students facing challenging circumstances, disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those who are hearing impaired, are well cared for and included in all school activities.
- The ERF is well led and managed. Great care is taken to include all these students in mainstream classes and activities with appropriate support and that they have the resources they need. This includes communication support, for example in assemblies and the school pantomime, sound field systems and radio aid systems to support students' inclusion. Leaders ensure that ERF students have access to deaf role models and are kept abreast of the latest technology. These all support the students' confidence and inclusion. All staff receive training in how best to support these students. Those with physical disabilities and needs are similarly well included because of the individual attention paid to their access requirements and needs.
- Students from Year 8 to 13 told inspectors how much they value the quality of careers advice they receive and the support that enables them to make appropriate option choices.
- The local authority has provided significant support for the school since its previous inspection, including governor training, setting up an external review of governance, individual subject support and building the capacity of subject leadership. It regularly reviews the school's performance and is confident that the new leadership team is effectively tackling the issues faced by the school.
- The school works hard to ensure that parents are fully engaged in their child's learning. The use of texting and social media and use of the website have improved the quality and speed of communication.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Since the previous inspection, the structure of the governing body has been refined and an external review has taken place. This, together with timely and clear information provided by the newly appointed Principal, has resulted in governors being able to support and challenge the school's leaders far more effectively. During the inspection, they expressed excitement at the changes taking place and their determination to continue improvement until the school is outstanding. Governors now have a thorough understanding of performance data and how the school compares to others both locally and nationally. They are fully aware of the quality of teaching and where weaknesses lie and have been checking carefully on procedures to secure the improvements within the English department. Regular and frequent meetings take place between governors and senior leaders, so that they have first-hand understanding of the way issues are being addressed. They are aware of the need to make close checks on the impact of pupil premium funding and to monitor the achievement of this group of students and of the most able. They are fully aware of the dangers posed by extremist views in an all-White British community and are striving to ensure that students are fully aware of the issue. The governing body ensures that safeguarding procedures are rigorous and meet current requirements. They have also, together with the local authority, been instrumental in ensuring students are made aware of the dangers of sexual exploitation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. They are keen to learn and display positive attitudes, even when the tasks set for them lack interest, by asking questions and responding as best they can. Students say that their learning is rarely disrupted and that behaviour in lessons is typically good. They show a mature understanding that some students may have behavioural difficulties and need support. Most parents and all staff expressed the view that students behave well and are well cared for.
- Behaviour around the school is calm and orderly. Students show maturity and behave in a calm and sensible manner, despite the school site being disrupted by extensive building work. They are polite and courteous to adults, greeting visitors in a friendly manner, and get on well with each other.
- The school site is kept clean and tidy and there is little litter, despite the dilapidated state of most of the buildings. Students present themselves well and most take a pride in their written work.

- Discriminatory language of any kind is rare and not tolerated. Students say that they feel accepted as individuals and that there is no homophobia. They told inspectors that they were aware of the different forms that bullying can take, particularly cyber-bullying, but that the school was very quick and effective in addressing any incidents. They spoke highly of the school's partnership with the police, who provide additional support. Older students lead assemblies for younger ones on topics such as anti-bullying.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students and their families facing challenging circumstances are well supported, including through the use of external agencies. Students in the ERF say that they are well supported and cared for. They are provided with deaf pagers to alert them to fire alarms and special lifts have been fitted to support students who have physical disabilities.
- Students have a good understanding of personal safety, including when using the internet. Good health and safety practice is well established in work-related classes such as construction, where all students and staff wear hard hats.
- Effective systems to promote good attendance have ensured it has risen strongly and is now above average. Punctuality to school and to lessons is also good, despite students often having a long way to walk between one building and another.
- There has been a rise in exclusions over the past two years. This is related to students being transferred from other schools mid-year. However, once they have settled down and received the strong support that the school provides, patterns of behaviour typically improve and exclusion rates fall.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Leaders' monitoring of teaching and the progress students make, shows that the quality of teaching is improving, although there remains some inconsistency. The sampling of students' books during the inspection confirmed this. Teaching in English has improved over the past year under new leadership, but this has not yet tackled all of the lower achievement in the subject.
- Lesson planning is inconsistent and not all teachers provide tasks or resources that are appropriate for the least able or sufficiently stretch the more-able students. Evidence from lessons and students' work shows that, too often, students undertake exactly the same task. In lessons observed, some found the work too easy and some too difficult. Teachers did not always notice this quickly enough to provide additional support or challenge.
- Teachers do not always ask questions effectively to encourage students to think deeply about their learning. Students are not routinely expected to explain or exemplify their answers and, sometimes, teachers were observed answering the question themselves, if they did not receive an immediate response. As a result, students, particularly the more able, were sometimes not sufficiently challenged.
- Teaching assistants and other additional staff are used well to support disabled students and those with special educational needs, including those who are deaf or have hearing impairment. This means that, overall, they achieve similarly to others and individual students move forward well, particularly in their confidence and in their communication skills.
- Teachers' promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is inconsistent. Students do not have enough opportunities to reflect on or discuss moral or other issues that affect them.
- A new marking system in English has had a dramatic impact on raising students' progress. It provides opportunities for students to redraft their work immediately, in light of the advice provided by their teacher. This is then marked again, so that there is quick reinforcement of the progress the students have made. The use of these 'improvement sheets' is being spread across the school, but as yet, it is not being consistently applied.
- Where students make the fastest progress, teachers show high expectations, make assessment criteria clear and enable students to check for themselves how well they are doing. For example, in an A-level English lesson observed, students were guided to identify key elements within the marking criteria and then apply them to their own work, so that they could see precisely what is required for a high-grade

response. Probing questioning challenged them to exemplify from their set text what was meant by each point and to explain the subtle differences in each level of marks. As a result, all students made rapid progress and expressed their enjoyment of their work.

- Relationships between adults and students are warm, and classrooms are calm. Where disabled students and those who have special educational needs are taught in small groups, they make good progress as a result of the individual encouragement and support they receive from teachers and teaching assistants, so they build their self-confidence and aspirations that they can do the very best that they can.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the school with basic skills in reading, writing, communication, and mathematics that are typically below average. The proportion of students gaining five or more good GCSE passes, including English and mathematics, by the end of Year 11, although improving, has remained below average over the last three years. In English, standards have been well below average since the previous inspection, but rose in 2014 to broadly average. Standards in mathematics have also risen and, for the past two years, have been well above average.
- Rates of progress in different subjects vary, reflecting the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Although students' progress in English is now improving, it is still slower than that seen in mathematics.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs has shown improvement over the last three years in terms of the proportion making expected progress. Progress during this period has been more erratic in English than in mathematics. The school does not yet have systems in place to enable the comparison of the performance of this group with national progress figures for all pupils from similar starting points. There is no significant difference in achievement between the very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and other students.
- Students across the school supported through the ERF are well included and make similar progress to other groups of students. They achieve well on their sixth form courses.
- There is a strong focus on literacy and numeracy throughout the school, including the expectation in most subjects that technical language will be used and understood. The Year 7 'catch-up' funding is used appropriately to provide support for students who join the school with low basic skills in numeracy and literacy. Further catch-up sessions are provided throughout Key Stage 3, ensuring that students have the skills they need to succeed. Sixth-form students support younger ones in their reading.
- Over the past three years, the gap between the attainment in English and mathematics of disadvantaged students and other students in the school and nationally has narrowed, although the pattern has been inconsistent. In 2013, eligible students were two thirds of a grade behind others in the school in English, but well over a grade behind students nationally. In mathematics, they were similarly two-thirds of a grade behind others in the school but only half a grade behind those nationally.
- The gap between the proportion of students eligible for additional funding and their classmates who make and exceed expected progress in both subjects widened in 2014, English being well below national figures. Students in mathematics made better progress than students nationally, although not as well as other students in the school.
- Over recent years, the more-able students have not made the progress they should. In 2013, the proportion of students gaining A or A* grades was well below national figures in many subjects and this remained the case in 2014, apart from in mathematics and history. In 2014, almost a quarter of the more-able students did not make expected progress in mathematics and a third failed to make expected progress in English.
- Students achieve well in the sixth form; pass rates are above average and improving year on year.
- In 2013, students were entered for GCSE mathematics at the end of Year 10. Attainment in mathematics has been consistently above average and students make consistently good progress in this subject.

Following the changes in the school's curriculum plan, future entry will be at the end of Year 11.

The sixth form provision

is good

- All groups of students make good progress in the sixth form. Housed in the new Phoenix Centre buildings, it has increased in size over recent years and more students are staying on to the sixth form after their GCSE courses. The school is also now attracting an increased number of students who are deaf or have a hearing impairment or physical disabilities, as a result of the quality of support and opportunity provided through the ERF.
- Over the past three years, standards have gradually risen in both academic and work-related courses and are above those seen nationally. Students have entered the sixth form with below-average attainment in GCSE courses and some enter from other providers with level 1 and 2 qualifications, yet leave above the national average. All students are expected to re-sit their GCSE English and mathematics examinations, until they achieve a grade C.
- Leaders' monitoring and records of students' achievement over time shows that the quality of teaching is consistently good. This is because the best teachers are deployed in the sixth form and no lessons are taught by temporary teachers. Students say that teachers provide good support, both in the feedback they provide on their work and their willingness to spend time providing one-to-one support.
- The curriculum offers an appropriate variety of academic and work-related courses. There is a strong focus on improving employability skills and a variety of opportunities is offered for work experience. All students went on to further or higher education, employment, or entered apprenticeship schemes in 2014, including some students starting their own businesses. Students who are deaf, have a hearing impairment, and those with physical disabilities, consistently, achieve well and move on to higher or further education in a variety of subjects.
- Sixth-form students told inspectors how much they enjoy school and the opportunities they have to develop leadership through supporting younger students and working in the community. Attendance and punctuality are well above average. The ERF also offers residential courses as part of the on-going life skills programme, where students work on developing independence, money management, teamwork, and social skills and students value these hugely.
- The sixth form is led and managed well. Students speak highly of the head of sixth form and value the careers guidance and support for university application they receive. They say they are well cared for.
- New leaders are reviewing the curriculum and have recognised that one of the work-related engineering courses was not sufficiently challenging to enable students to gain an appropriate qualification. This has now been changed. Because of the work experience they are able to undertake, students following the construction course are able to complete their qualification by the age of 18. This is unique in the United Kingdom.

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	112939
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	441906

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	680
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	155
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve Atkinson
Principal	Alan Johnson
Date of previous school inspection	5 February 2013
Telephone number	01773 712477
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