

# Witchford Village College

Manor Road, Witchford, Ely, CB6 2JA

**Inspection dates** 4–5 February 2015

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' progress is not good enough in some subjects, especially mathematics and modern foreign languages.
- The proportion of students gaining five or more A\* to C grades at GCSE including mathematics and English was below the national average.
- The proportion of students making good progress in mathematics by the end of Year 11 remains below average.
- The standard of teaching across most subjects and year groups is not consistently good. Students are not set work that challenges them sufficiently to ensure they make good progress.
- Marking varies in quality. Too few teachers provide students with clear guidance on how to improve their work or check that they make the necessary improvements.
- Teachers are not all consistently applying the behaviour policy and, as a result, learning in some lessons is affected by a minority of students talking when they should be working.
- Leaders have not previously put enough emphasis on looking at the impact of teaching on students' achievement when judging the quality of teaching.
- Not all subject leaders are monitoring the work within their departments with sufficient rigour to raise standards.

### The school has the following strengths

- Supported by senior leaders, strong leadership from the Principal has led to a number of improvements, including raising staff and students' expectations about achievement.
- As a result of recent training, governors are now more effective in monitoring the work of the college.
- Achievement in English is good.
- Leaders have improved the curriculum. Students have more opportunity to follow an appropriate range of courses that allow them to progress to a range of options when they leave the college.
- Autistic students attending 'The Cabin' make good progress because of the support and guidance they receive.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 30 lessons to observe learning. Senior leaders joined inspectors for six of these observations. Inspectors also looked at work in students’ books in lessons and conducted a work scrutiny with the Principal in order to judge students’ progress in mathematics.
- A range of documents were examined, including the college’s analysis of its own work and its improvement plan, information on students’ academic progress, and documents relating to the quality of teaching, behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.
- Inspectors talked to four groups of students and held informal discussions with students at both break and lunchtime.
- Discussions were held with the Principal, three members of the governing body, senior leaders and all subject leaders and the college’s improvement partner. The lead inspector also spoke to a member of the local authority over the telephone.
- The inspectors took account of the 38 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the college’s file of letters and emails from parents along with any responses.
- The inspectors received and considered the views of the 59 staff that completed questionnaires.

## Inspection team

Caroline Parry, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Azizah Pathan	Additional Inspector
Susan Cox	Additional Inspector
David Gutmann	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Witchford Community College is smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- Most students are White British. Only a small proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and only a very small number speak English as an additional language.
- At 13%, the proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- Approximately 18% of students are eligible for the pupil premium, which is a below average proportion. This additional funding is given to schools for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.
- The college runs a specialist local authority funded resource centre, 'The Cabin', catering for eight students who have autism. Students are taught with the rest of the school for a range of subjects.
- There are no students being educated offsite.
- The Principal has been in post since September 2013.
- In 2014, the college failed to meet the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress at GCSE.
- The college is part of the Witchford Area Schools Partnership. This comprises the local primary schools, the Harbour School and Witchford Village College. The schools in the partnership provide a range of support services to students and their families.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to raise attainment in all subjects, especially mathematics and modern foreign languages, by ensuring that:
  - all groups of students are set work that is sufficiently challenging for them
  - all teachers mark work frequently and consistently so that students are given clear guidance on how to improve their work
  - teachers check that students follow the advice they are given through marking.
- Improve the behaviour of a small minority of students in class by making sure that all teachers tackle any incidence of low-level disruption immediately and apply the college's behaviour policy consistently.
- Strengthen leadership and management by making sure that:
  - when evaluating the quality of teaching, leaders focus on the impact teaching has on students' achievement
  - all subject leaders rigorously monitor the work of their department in order to drive improvements in teaching and learning.

## Inspection judgements

### The leadership and management requires improvement

- The leadership of teaching has not been sufficiently robust to secure good progress in all subjects. As a result, students are failing to make good progress in some key subjects, especially mathematics.
- Leaders have previously had an overly positive view of the quality of teaching because, when evaluating teaching, they did not take enough account of the impact of teaching on students' learning. Nevertheless, the leadership of teaching is becoming more effective and leaders now have a realistic view of teaching. Senior staff carry out regular visits to lessons and they do look at work in students' books see how well students are learning. This monitoring has resulted in leaders identifying staff that need support with their teaching and the college has put training in place to help these teachers to improve. As a result, college data and work in books shows that teaching is having more impact on students' progress in a number of subjects. However, teaching is not consistently good in all subjects across the college.
- Not all subject leaders are monitoring the work of staff and students within their subject rigorously enough. Inspectors saw examples of inconsistent marking within departments. Subject leaders are identifying students who are falling behind with their work but the support provided to help these students to catch up is not always sufficiently targeted to ensure they make good progress. Where subject leaders are monitoring effectively, then students make good progress; for example, in English and physical education.
- The Principal has high expectations for students and, as a result, more challenging attainment targets have been set for the students. It is an expectation that all students will make good progress from their starting point. In order to achieve this, changes have been made to the monitoring of teaching. Performance management targets, pay awards and promotion are now all tied to the progress students make.
- Senior leaders have introduced a clear set of expectations for behaviour and this has had a positive impact on behaviour around the college. However, they have not yet secured consistently good behaviour in all lessons. Students understand the code of conduct and the consequences if they fail to meet it. However, inspectors found that some teachers were less strict than others in applying the code.
- Leaders ensure that there is no discrimination. All students have the opportunity to participate in activities within the college. The pupil premium funding is not just used to support the academic learning of disadvantaged students but also to ensure they have full access to educational visits and, if they wish, to music tuition. Students with autism have two hours a week specialist teaching in 'The Cabin' but, to ensure equality of opportunity, they have one-to-one support in mainstream lessons. These students also receive specialist careers advice and, as a result, all go on to a college placement or apprenticeship.
- Senior leaders have recently reviewed the curriculum and students now have access to a wide range of subjects in both Key Stages 3 and 4. In Key Stage 4, the college has reduced the number of vocational qualifications on offer to make sure that students have the opportunity to gain academic qualifications that will allow them to progress to further education, employment or other training. However, it recognises that some students would benefit from specialist vocational programmes, so courses such as construction are available to a small number of students. Students are supported well when choosing their examination subjects and they receive good careers advice. All go on to further education or training when they leave the college.
- The curriculum caters well for students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. Students study a range of religions and, in subjects such as geography and ethics, the differences in lifestyle and culture associated with a range of countries. Inspectors observed a tutor session where students reflected on their behaviour and the impact it can have on others as well as on themselves. Assemblies related to national and international events are supported by tutor sessions that provide opportunities for students to discuss events currently in the news. Activities like this ensure that students are adequately prepared for life in modern Britain.

- Students are able to choose from a variety of out-of-school clubs and activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, sport, drama and music activities. These activities are well attended. They also have opportunities to develop their leadership skills by becoming sports ambassadors, peer mentors and prefects.
- Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements, and the college make effective use of outside agencies to provide additional support for students and their families.
- Leaders have a realistic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the college. There is a realistic plan to bring about improvements to the college. Senior leaders have chosen to use an improvement adviser to validate their judgements about the quality of their work. The local authority carries out an annual review of the college, and governors participate in their training programmes.
- A large majority of parents and staff feel the college is well led and managed.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have not previously challenged college leaders rigorously enough. However, changes to the governing body, together with much recent training, have enabled governors to challenge and support the school more effectively.
  - Governors know how students' achievement compares with that of other schools nationally and they are aware that the quality of teaching requires improvement. They visit the college to review the work of different subject departments and they challenge subject leaders regarding the achievement of students.
  - The governors volunteered to participate in a local authority review of the use and impact of the pupil premium funding on achievement. The review identified many areas of good practice within the college and the governing body are now implementing the recommendations.
  - Governors have supported the Principal in ensuring that teachers' pay awards are closely linked to student progress and they effectively monitor staff pay and promotions.

## The behaviour and safety of pupils

## requires improvement

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement. The attitude of students towards their learning is not consistently good across all subjects. A small minority of students fail to concentrate on their work and talk when they should be working. This slows their own and others' learning.
- The college has very clear code of student behaviour but a lack of consistency by some teachers in applying it results in a small minority of students causing low-level disruption and subsequent underachievement. When teachers use the clear framework to manage behaviour, the students respond well and make progress with their learning.
- Where teaching activities are interesting, students have very positive attitudes towards their learning and remain on task throughout the lesson. They are eager to contribute to their learning in these lessons. Inspectors saw some excellent examples of behaviour in lessons.
- Behaviour around the college is good. Students conduct themselves in a polite and respectful manner and conduct is orderly. Students are prompt to lessons. They are polite to staff and visitors.
- Students respect the building, which is litter and graffiti free. They wear their uniform smartly.
- Leaders closely monitor the behaviour of students and those who find it difficult to manage their behaviour receive appropriate support. As a result, the number of students who are involved in incidents of unacceptable behaviour has reduced.
- Students are very clear about the consequences of misbehaviour and understand right from wrong. Almost all students appreciate the reward points they get for good behaviour.

## Safety

- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students say they feel safe and secure in the college. They are taught to keep themselves safe when using the internet, when outside the school and in making decisions about safe behaviour as part of their curriculum.
- Students told inspectors that bullying is rare but, should it occur, they have every confidence in the college dealing with it. College records show that the number of incidents of bullying has decreased and that there is no racist or homophobic bullying.
- The attendance of students is average. The college uses home visits to families to support the attendance of students who find coming to school difficult. The college follows up the absence of all students to ensure their absence is genuine and that they are safe.
- Students speak favourably about the student services and how the staff support them during times of difficulty.
- All staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and the identity of all visitors is checked before they are allowed to enter the student area. Students know they need to report anyone who is not wearing a visitor's badge and staff also check visitors' identification.
- Most parents and staff who expressed a view feel that students are safe in the college.

## The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- There is too great a variation in the standard of teaching across subjects and year groups to ensure that all groups of students make good progress.
- Teachers know their students well but not all have high enough expectations of what the students can achieve. As a result, work set is not always challenging or demanding enough for all groups of students. This has resulted in progress in some subjects, especially mathematics, remaining below average.
- There is also a lack of consistency in teachers' marking. Inspectors saw some examples of excellent marking in English, mathematics and geography, where the teachers have been given very clear guidance on what the student needs to do in order to improve their work. Students had acted upon this advice and, as a result, their work showed improvement and good progress over time. This practice is not evident in all books in all subjects.
- Inspectors saw evidence of good writing development across a range of subjects. Students are encouraged to write in a variety of styles and to add detail to their writing. There is also evidence that mathematical skills are being used in subjects such as science and physical education. However, college leaders acknowledge that not enough has been done to develop the use of mathematics across other subjects. Students in Key Stage 3 have one reading lesson a week but inspectors saw few other opportunities for students to read in lessons.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are supported effectively in most lessons. Support for those students with autism is good, as the teaching assistants are skilled in meeting the specific learning needs of these students.

## The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Students join the college with average attainment. The proportion of students leaving the college with five or more A\* to C GCSEs including mathematics and English has been broadly average except in 2014.
- In 2014, the proportion of students gaining five or more good grades at GCSE was below average. This is largely due to the changes to qualifications rules that apply to GCSEs and vocational qualifications from the summer of 2014. The vocational qualification for information technology, the change from vocational science to GCSE science, and only the first mathematics grade counting towards the floor standards, have

all contributed to this decline.

- Progress in mathematics remains below average. Even if the highest (re-sit) GCSE grade for Year 11 students is considered, the proportion of students making the progress they should was still below average. Data for current year groups show that progress in mathematics is improving, although it is still below the progress made in English.
- The proportion of students making the progress they should in English is in line with the national average.
- The attainment of students in modern foreign languages remains below average.
- The gap in attainment between disadvantaged students and other students nationally was almost two GCSE grades in English and in mathematics; with other students in the college, the gap was almost one grade. The college's recent monitoring indicates that this attainment gap is closing as a result of well-targeted support funded by the pupil premium.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is monitored closely and they mostly receive appropriate support. They are mostly making broadly similar progress across all subjects to other students. Students with autism make good progress as a result of the support they receive.
- The college has had a policy of entering students early for GCSE mathematics and this has resulted in the most able and middle ability students failing to gain higher grades. However, this is no longer the policy and, this year; all students will sit their examination at the end of Year 11.
- In 2014, the most-able students made the progress they should in English. However, their progress in mathematics was below average and work in students' books and college assessment data confirms that the most-able students are not challenged enough in mathematics to raise their attainment. The same is the case for modern foreign languages.
- The small proportion of students from different ethnic backgrounds or who speak English as an additional language achieve in line with other students nationally and often better than other students in the college.
- The Year 7 'catch up' funding is used to provide small-group reading support for students who are behind in reading when they join the school. Most students who receive this additional support are making good progress as a result. All students in Key Stage 3 benefit from weekly reading sessions.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	137547
<b>Local authority</b>	Cambridgeshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	456361

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Academy converter
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	749
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Sandra Thompson
<b>Principal</b>	Christopher Terry
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	15 May 2013
<b>Telephone number</b>	01353 662053
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