

Connell Sixth Form College

16-19 academy

Inspection dates		27–30 January 2015
Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement-3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
Outcomes for learners		Requires improvement-3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Requires improvement-3
Effectiveness of leadership and management		Requires improvement-3

Summary of key findings for learners

This provider requires improvement because:

- success rates on AS courses vary from good to poor
- a significant minority of students do not make sufficient progress
- although discrete English and mathematics lessons are good there is insufficient additional support outside these lessons for those who need it, and teachers of other subjects do not incorporate sufficiently the development of students' English and mathematical skills in their lessons
- Not all teaching motivates students to make sufficient progress; teachers do not have sufficient opportunities to share good practice in teaching, learning and assessment methods
- in a minority of subjects students' attendance is poor
- governors and senior leaders do monitor the quality of teaching sufficiently; many teachers who started work at the college this year have not been observed since their interview
- self-assessment lacks rigour; the self-assessment report is not sufficiently evaluative, it overstates strengths and does not lead to rapid enough improvements in quality.

This provider has the following strengths:

- the college has outstanding procedures to safeguard students
- the small cohort of students on a level two study programme make good progress
- students enjoy an extensive range of enrichment activities, which helps them to develop relevant work-related skills
- most students enjoy college and attend regularly; they particularly like the friendly and welcoming atmosphere and the high standard of accommodation and resources
- the curriculum is planned well to meet an identified gap in academic post-16 education in East Manchester; students benefit from managers' work to build effective partnerships with a range of organisations, including employers and careers advisors.

Full report

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- In order to eliminate inconsistencies in success rates between subjects, and students' irregular attendance in a few, managers should develop a system that enables teachers to share best practice in teaching and learning.
- Managers should improve systems to monitor teaching and target staff development on the identified areas for improvement of individual teachers.
- Managers should monitor carefully the effectiveness of the recently introduced literacy and mathematics strategies to ensure students gain sufficient additional support in these subjects, and to ensure all teachers incorporate development of English and mathematics skills in their subjects.
- Governors and senior leaders should increase the rigour of self-assessment processes in order to identify all areas for development in the college, and ensure that actions in the quality improvement plan are effective in ensuring students receive a good quality education in all subjects.

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The college opened in September 2013. Almost all learners are on a study programme at level 3 and take AS and A-level qualifications. Subjects with the highest number of students are science and mathematics, business studies and psychology. Advanced BTEC courses are offered in business, science and sport. A small number of learners are enrolled on a GCSE programme, which is targeted at learners who do not yet have the entry requirements for level 3 courses. ▪ Success rates for the small number of students who took AS examinations last year vary too much. They are good in chemistry, physics and psychology but too low in a significant minority of subjects. Students' progress against their starting points also varies too much across subjects last year and in the current year. ▪ The development of students' skills and knowledge varies from good to insufficient. Students taking A-level philosophy are unable to recall previous learning sufficiently. Students on AS computing courses are not learning sufficiently how to think for themselves and evaluate problems. ▪ Students taking A-level economics are skilful at analysing and presenting theory in graphic form to support research on recession recovery. In French, AS students answer confidently and carry out discussions with each other in the target language. ▪ Most students on the level two study programme make good progress and are on target to progress to level three courses next year. Learners taking GCSE sociology understand the differences between crime and deviance and are able to apply this knowledge to new learning on why people commit crime. In English GCSE, students develop confidence to give opinions and structure their arguments well in writing tasks. ▪ The small number of students last year makes statistical analysis of achievement gaps unreliable. In the first term of this year, there were no significant gaps. In the current term the college identifies groups not making sufficient progress as those receiving free school meals and students of Bangladeshi origin. The college is currently analysing the reasons for this in order to put actions in place so it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness. ▪ Students develop useful work-related skills through work placements, enrichment activities and the enterprise programme. For example, they gained skills in teamwork, planning, costings and 	

profit margins in a sales event held before Christmas. However, students do not all understand the importance of other employability skills, such as regular attendance, and personal presentation, for example a few students chew gum in class. Attendance is too low in a minority of subjects.

- Students' ability to communicate and their interpersonal skills are good in one-to-one interactions but too many lack confidence when speaking in groups. Writing skills also require further development, for example, to increase students' confidence and performance in examinations. The development of students' mathematical skills requires improvement as too few are encouraged to extend their knowledge and skills in mathematical concepts.
- It is not possible to make a judgement on how well students progress after leaving college as the first cohort complete their study programmes this summer. Of the 30 students that will complete their study programme this summer, half have applied to university, most have already received offers and others are awaiting the outcomes of their application. Students not applying to university plan to progress to apprenticeships, employment or take a gap year.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because too many students do not progress to their full potential within their study programmes. The good practice that exists in teaching is not sufficiently shared across subjects.
- Too many teachers do not personalise learning sufficiently to meet individual students' learning needs. As a result, a significant minority of students are not set work that is sufficiently challenging for them. A minority of lessons are uninspiring with teachers presenting information to students, leaving little opportunity for them to participate in learning activities. The pace of learning is slow as these students sit passively, without sufficient opportunity to broaden their knowledge by sharing information and ideas.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and the majority plan interesting tasks that help make learning relevant to students. For example, in business studies, students enjoy the challenge of analysing the attributes and marketing activities of a well-known product. These teachers coach well to help students reflect on their performance and identify areas where they can improve.
- Students following GCSE English and GCSE mathematics courses benefit from a wide variety of learning activities to help them develop their skills. For example, students are asked to share information from personal experiences which they then use to complete a creative writing task. However, class sizes are large and too many learners do not progress as quickly as they might due to insufficient additional support until recently to help individual students.
- The development of students' English and mathematics skills in other subjects requires improvement. Attention by teachers to correcting punctuation, spelling and grammatical errors in students' assessed work is inconsistent. The recent implementation of whole-college literacy and numeracy strategies has yet to be fully embedded, although in a minority of lessons teachers have begun to successfully integrate the teaching of these skills. For example, in economics, students are regularly reminded about strategies for interpreting text and data, and in sports, teachers help students develop a glossary of tricky words to improve their spelling.
- Assessment requires improvement as too many teachers rely on direct questioning to assess learning without making sure all students are involved. Students are regularly moved on too quickly to a new topic before their individual learning has been confirmed. In a minority of lessons, teachers use a good variety of assessment strategies to test and check learning, including peer assessment to assess written work and develop higher level answers which students then share.
- The college works productively with local employers and organisations to provide appropriate work experience for students. Each placement is carefully matched and planned effectively to meet students' academic and personal needs. This usefully broadens their experiences and helps to prepare them for their chosen career path.

- Short-term target-setting requires improvement. Most teachers set clear long-term targets for individual students based on their prior attainments and career ambition. They are less adept at setting and formally recording meaningful short-term targets which set out specific small steps to help students progress towards their overall goal.
- Study programmes include a wide range of interesting activities that develop personal and social skills well and student participation is high. Students enjoy activities such as an art club, chess sessions, films, science and horticulture discussions. For example, students have set up a project exploring sustainability and will present their ideas during a competition organised by a local university. An accredited personal development course improves students' life skills and their approaches to improving their health and well-being.
- Students receive good advice and guidance before they start their study programme and this continues during their courses. Staff promote a good range of progression routes to employment and training including apprenticeships, alongside university courses. A varied programme of visiting business speakers from a range of industry sectors provides regular updates and current information about their work and experiences, providing good role models.
- Students develop their understanding of diversity and this increases their awareness of living and working in a multicultural society. Teachers make appropriate use of opportunities to promote and extend learners' awareness about different cultures and lifestyles. For example, in a French lesson, students discuss stereotypes and perceptions of men wearing makeup, and how tattoos may be viewed in a range of everyday contexts. However, in a minority of lessons, there is insufficient integration of equality and diversity in the context of the subject. Students enjoy attending the college and their behaviour is good. They treat each other with respect and work well together.

Science and mathematics 16-19 study programmes

Requires improvement

Teaching, learning and assessment in science and mathematics require improvement because:

- a significant proportion of students do not make the expected progress given their attainment when starting college
- teachers use ineffective questioning techniques in biology that do not encourage learners to think for themselves; questioning is superficial in the main and does not explore students prior or current understanding; questioning periods in biology lessons are dominated by a minority of students which disengages the rest of the class
- the development of students' English skills requires improvement; too many students struggle to use core terminology or theory; good practice in physics and chemistry is not shared effectively to ensure all students can understand assessment criteria and misconceptions are not always effectively dealt with
- pass rates in AS biology and mathematics examinations are low for the first cohort who completed the courses in 2013/14
- not all teachers have an effective intervention strategy to adequately help the students make progress and achieve; in these lessons, weaker students rely heavily on their peers for their supply of 'correct answers' rather than having the skills set to find them for themselves
- teaching does not always take into account the individual needs of the students; strategies to cater for students of lower ability are weak in biology
- systems to track students' progress are in place but are not used well enough to trigger timely additional support; the intervention strategies that are triggered from the tracking systems are not always effective

- the best teaching strategies are not systematically shared across the subject areas; particularly effective strategies in physics and chemistry need to be discussed and embedded within the other subjects.

In science and mathematics the provider has the following strengths:

- students taking physics and BTEC science courses develop good practical and research skills; students make good progress due to astute teacher guidance and support
- success rates for the first cohort of students taking AS courses in 2013/14 are high in chemistry and physics
- teaching in mathematics is improving and is now mostly good; in mathematics and most chemistry lessons teachers promote independent learning skills to ensure students are confident in problem solving
- the expertise and high expectations of the leadership in physics and chemistry ensures students in these lessons learn effectively and develop accurate understanding of core concepts
- successful work experience placements are well received by the students in science and mathematics and support their applications to study at undergraduate level or apply for employment.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The college opened in September 2013; leaders and managers have not yet had sufficient impact on improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and outcomes for learners. They have made significant progress towards an ambitious plan to bring a broad variety of academic programmes to East Manchester. The capital programme leading to the opening of a new building in September 2014 was well managed. The strategy for expansion is proving highly effective, with significant increases in student and staff numbers in September 2014.
- Most aspects of the students' study programmes are well managed and the curriculum enables students to gain a broad range of skills and experience. Many take part in a useful and varied programme of enrichment activities and well-planned work placements. However, managers were slow to put in place strategies to develop students' English and mathematics skills across all subjects in the college.
- Students benefit from good partnership links forged by the senior leadership team. Links with local employers and prestigious sports clubs give students valuable access to first class facilities and good enrichment in the form of visiting speakers and work experience placements. Good links with a range of universities help students with career and higher education choices.
- Self-assessment is not sufficiently rigorous. The analysis of outcomes for students last year is not sufficiently self-critical and does not relate weaker outcomes to poor teaching. As a result, the quality improvement plan is not having sufficient impact.
- Despite over-generous judgements in the college's 2013/14 self-assessment report, governors have a clear understanding of the underperforming subjects that need to improve learners' success rates. They challenge managers well on this issue and scrutinise students' and parents' views. However, governors have not received sufficient information to help them judge inconsistencies in the current quality of teaching.
- Performance management is not yet fully established. Seventeen teachers started work at the college in September 2014 and, by the time of the inspection in January 2015, not all had been observed to establish the quality of their work, apart from the lesson they taught during the interview process. Consequently, managers have not identified all the staff that require additional training to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment in their subject are consistently good.

- Managers are on target with their 2014/15 schedule of appraisals but there has not been a mid-year appraisal to speed up and monitor necessary improvements. Action plans are in place for subjects that underperformed last year and improvements have taken place, for example in English and mathematics. However, the pace of improvement is too slow in biology.
- Staff benefit from an appropriate programme of staff development on college procedures and the use of data and quality systems, as well as training on safeguarding procedures and equality and diversity. However, too few have received individual, targeted training arising from quality improvement activities around teaching, learning and assessment.
- Managers make good use of the views of students, parents/carers and staff. For example, parental feedback on one course led to managers taking action to address weaknesses that were hampering students' progress.
- The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The college has attracted students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and ability levels. Students are protected from harassment and bullying, and managers are particularly vigilant in protecting students from risks inherent in the use of the internet. Managers and staff foster an ethos of mutual respect.
- The arrangements for safeguarding learners are outstanding. The college has dealt exceptionally well with instances where managers and staff acted promptly and highly effectively to protect and safeguard students. Incidents involved very effective work with external agencies, including the police and local safeguarding boards. Community police visit the college regularly and speak highly of the college's work with outside agencies to keep students safe. The lead governor on safeguarding has excellent training and experience for this role. Staff and managers are proactive in assessing risks to students and use very effective reporting networks to keep all parties informed and alert.

Record of Main Findings (RMF)

Connell Sixth Form College

Inspection grades are based on a provider’s performance: 1: Outstanding 2: Good 3: Requires improvement 4: Inadequate	Overall	14-16 part-time provision	14-16 full-time provision	16-19 study programmes	Traineeships	19+ learning programmes	Apprenticeships	Employability	Community learning
Overall effectiveness	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Outcomes for learners	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The quality of teaching, learning and assessment	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
The effectiveness of leadership and management	3	N/A	N/A	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Subject areas graded for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Grade
Science	3
Mathematics and statistics	3

Provider details

Type of provider	16-19 academy							
Age range of learners	16+							
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	39							
Principal/CEO	Mrs G Winter							
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection							
Website address	www.connellsixthformcollege.com							
Provider information at the time of the inspection								
Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+
	N/A	N/A	19	N/A	291	2	N/A	N/A
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16-18	19+	16-18	19+	16-18	19+		
	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A		
Number of traineeships	16-19		19+		Total			
	N/A		N/A		N/A			
Number of learners aged 14-16	N/A							
Full-time	N/A							
Part-time	N/A							
Number of community learners	N/A							
Number of employability learners	N/A							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency (EFA)							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ None 							

Contextual information

The college opened in September 2013 with a pilot cohort of 35 full-time students and four part-time students. It was established to provide high-quality academic provision for young people in East Manchester. The college building opened in autumn 2014. In addition to its main student cohort, the college provides courses in BTEC sport, functional skills and A-levels for Manchester City Football Club scholars; this provision is funded by the Premier League.

Information about this inspection

Lead inspector

Sue Harrison HMI

One of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and three additional inspectors, assisted by the vice-principal as nominee, carried out the inspection with short notice. Inspectors took account of the college's most recent self-assessment report and development plans. Inspectors also used data on learners' achievements to help them make judgements. Inspectors used group and individual interviews and online questionnaires to gather the views of learners, parents and employers; these views are reflected throughout the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the college. Inspectors looked at the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all of the provision and graded science and mathematics.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement
Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

Detailed grade characteristics can be viewed in the *Handbook for the inspection of further education and skills 2012*, Part 2:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/handbook-for-the-inspection-of-further-education-and-skills-from-september-2012

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