

The Limes College

Robin Hood Lane, Sutton, SM1 2SD

Inspection dates 12–13 March 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- Students make excellent progress and many experience success for the first time in their school career.
- Virtually all students in Key Stage 4 leave with recognised qualifications and have a course, apprenticeship or job to go to when they leave.
- A very high proportion of students in Key Stages 2 and 3 return successfully to mainstream schools.
- The outstanding leadership of the headteacher is driving rapid improvement. She is strongly supported by the leadership team and the management committee.
- Leaders and managers at all levels are ambitious for the college and believe that the students deserve nothing less than the best education possible.
- The management committee has an excellent grasp of the strengths and weaknesses of the college and provides highly effective challenge as well as support.
- Teachers know their students' strengths and weaknesses very well and plan interesting lessons which help them to make outstanding progress.
- Students know they come to college to learn and their behaviour in lessons and around college is excellent.
- Staff work very hard to help students learn to manage their behaviour. Any individual difficulties are not allowed to disrupt the education of others.
- Students say they feel safe in college and do not express any concerns about bullying. Almost all improve their attendance and punctuality.
- The family outreach team work very closely with the leadership team and staff to give students, and their families, outstanding support.
- Senior staff check teaching regularly and very thoroughly. They use the information from this to plan high-quality training and support to help teachers improve their skills.
- The curriculum is very well matched to students' individual needs, particularly in the good range of vocational courses offered in college and on placements with partner organisations.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.
- The inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Lessons were jointly observed with members of the leadership team.
- One visit was made to alternative provision and inspectors also visited two parent workshops.
- There were too few responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, to be considered but account was taken of the college’s own information on contact with parents, and discussions were held with small groups of parents.
- Thirty-six staff questionnaires were considered.
- Meetings were held with the college leaders, teaching and non-teaching staff, several students, the Chair and one other member of the management committee, and a representative from the local authority.
- Documents reviewed included the college’s self-evaluation and development plans, financial records, teachers’ planning and assessment files, examination results, information about students’ destinations on leaving college, samples of students’ work, policies and procedures, management committee minutes and attendance records.

Inspection team

Grace Marriott, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Clementina Aine

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The Limes College caters for students who have been permanently excluded from school or who are at risk of permanent exclusion. It also provides short-term respite placements for students in Key Stages 2 and 3. Most Key Stage 4 students will remain at The Limes College for the rest of their school career.
- Most students attending The Limes College have special educational needs.
- Most students are White British. Very few students are learning English as an additional language.
- The college has many more boys than girls.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium (additional government funding for students who are eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after) is well above average.
- Most courses are taught at The Limes College, sometimes by visiting specialists, as for example, from The Laurence Dallaglio Foundation. The college also uses a range of alternative providers, including Carshalton College, Crystal Palace Football Club Project, SILC (construction industry training) and Road2Success.
- Since the previous inspection the leadership team has been re-organised and two new deputy headteachers have been appointed. The management committee has taken over full responsibility for The Limes College and has the same responsibilities as the governing bodies of other maintained schools.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing to match more fully the achievement in reading by ensuring that staff provide a wider range of opportunities in subjects other than English for students to write in depth and at greater length.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Since the last inspection the leadership team has been reorganised. The new senior team, together with the middle leaders, is providing outstanding leadership. They share very high expectations for what students can achieve and their work is resulting in rapid and secure improvement.
- Staff are supportive of the direction the college is taking. They are a strong team who work well together and understand how their different roles contribute to the success of the college in meeting students' needs. Students and staff work in a supportive environment but one which challenges them to do their best.
- The family outreach team is very effectively managed. The team provides a range of services and workshops which help parents and the young people themselves work through any difficulties and make sensible decisions about their future.
- Discussion with groups of parents as well as the college's own records show that parents are very supportive of what the college is doing for their children. They say that communication is very good, staff are always willing to help them and that the college does not give up on students.
- Checks on the quality of teaching and its impact on students' progress are regular and rigorous. As well as reviewing work done in college, senior staff keep a careful check on the quality of work on the courses provided by partner organisations, as well as monitoring closely students' progress, attendance and behaviour.
- The college leaders use performance management effectively to inform them about the quality of teaching and improve outcomes for students. The information is used to plan well-targeted whole-staff and individual training which meets specific needs.
- The college sets high expectations for teaching and holds teachers fully accountable for their students' progress. Teachers, in turn, are thoughtful and reflective about their teaching and are confident in the support they are given to help them improve.
- The curriculum is well organised to meet the needs and interests of the students very well. Subjects studied in Key Stages 2 and 3 closely match those studied in mainstream schools, enabling these students to move back easily and successfully.
- All students in Key Stage 4 study English, mathematics, science and physical education and they also learn to cook. Students also have a choice of options which include vocational qualifications in areas such as business studies, construction, hair and beauty, and travel and tourism. Several courses are delivered through highly effective and well-managed partnerships with other organisations.
- In addition to GCSE and BTEC qualifications, many students achieve industry-recognised qualifications in construction trades. Groups also successfully complete the nationally recognised Football Association Level 1 Coaching Certificate and Community Sports Leader Award through the Crystal Palace FC Project.
- The college's arrangements for safeguarding students are outstanding. All necessary safeguarding checks and policies are in place for on and off-site working. Staff training in safeguarding is up-to-date and relevant. Students receive exceptionally good guidance on how to stay safe in different circumstances.
- The college prepares students extremely well for life in modern Britain through personal, social and health education, work-related learning and careers education. This promotes equality of opportunity and encourages respect for and tolerance of others. They learn about democratic institutions and the dangers of extremism and radicalisation. The college checks carefully that the pupil premium is used effectively to provide helpful additional support where needed.
- The local authority has provided an appropriate level of challenge and support for the college to help the college continue to improve.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee has wide-ranging expertise and the members use their considerable skills and educational experience to benefit the college. They use this both to challenge the leaders of the college and to give strong support. They willingly make their expertise, for example in data analysis, available to college staff to help to raise expectations for what students could achieve and the progress they could make.
 - Members know the strengths in teaching and where it could be improved still further. They review how performance management and training are used to improve teaching. They have been prepared to be firm in their decisions and ensure that progression up the pay scale is based on merit. The management committee closely monitors how well all students achieve but look particularly closely at how well additional funding is spent to provide individual support for students who need it. They also ensure that the college meets statutory requirements, including for safeguarding.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of students is outstanding. Students show respect for their environment and the college is virtually litter and graffiti free.
- Many students arrive at the college with a long history of poor behaviour but, from the start, intensive support helps them to learn to control their behaviour and benefit from what the college can offer.
- Students know what is expected of them and also learn quickly that their actions have consequences which can be either positive or negative. They know that their behaviour will not be allowed to disrupt the education of others.
- Relationships are excellent at all levels. Students respect the staff and know that they will be well supported if they are going through a difficult time. During conversations with inspectors students were very positive about what the staff were doing to help them.
- Discussion with the 'Student Voice' group confirmed that they feel genuinely consulted and able to influence the way in which the college is run, provided that their suggestions are sensible.
- The family outreach team and senior staff work very closely with parents and a range of different agencies to make sure that students receive specialist help should they need it, and that they benefit from their time at The Limes College. Parents were extremely positive about this aspect of the college's work.
- Students generally have very good attitudes to learning, whether being taught in the college or off-site. Their concentration and willingness to work improve rapidly during their time at the college.
- The college has a rigorous yet supportive approach to managing attendance, and staff follow up absence very quickly. Attendance is still below that found in most mainstream schools but, almost without exception, students' attendance and punctuality improve significantly during their time at the college.

Safety

- The college's work to keep students safe is outstanding. Students say that they feel safe in college and that what they learn about issues such as alcohol, drugs and sexual health helps them to stay safe outside college.
- In discussion with students it was clear that they believe that any bullying would be very swiftly dealt with. The college's own monitoring records of behaviour incidents show that bullying is rare.
- Students know about the dangers of different types of bullying, including cyber-bullying, and how destructive homophobic and racist bullying can be. The college carefully monitors computer use.
- The premises are secure and the students are well supervised on site. Regular checks, risk assessments and careful supervision mean that students are safe when being taught off-site.

The quality of teaching is outstanding

- Staff at all levels are outstanding at promoting students' personal development and helping them to overcome their barriers to learning. As a result, students rapidly gain confidence and start to believe that they can succeed. This applies as much with the older as the younger students.
- Lessons are planned to take account of students' different learning needs and, where necessary, to enable them to catch up. If students are giving up too easily, staff continue to encourage them to try again. The quality of displays, particularly students' own art work and photography, illustrates their increasing pride in their work.
- Teachers and teaching assistants promote basic skills effectively, but especially in reading. This helps older students to cope with more demanding examination work, and younger students to move back successfully to mainstream schools.
- In an English lesson, the skilful use of an interactive whiteboard by both teacher and students helped to improve students' skills in analysing and summarising information. They were then able to justify their decisions to the class. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher's probing support and questioning helped students to show their depth of understanding of algebraic problems and explain very precisely how they had solved them.
- Teachers demonstrate considerable expertise in engaging students, making very good use of a wide range of practical as well as academic activities. For example, as a result of students being given responsibility for cooking the midday meal for staff and other students, they gained a high level of understanding of professional catering.
- Staff make good use of praise to motivate students, so that they know when and how well they have

achieved their targets. Students know, however, that they have to earn praise and that it will not be given for poor work, and they mostly respond well. Students' attainment and progress are regularly and accurately assessed. Feedback gives them excellent guidance on how to improve their work and its impact is seen on better progress and results.

- Marking has improved in all areas but it is particularly effective in science. In 2014, all students in Year 11 achieved at least a BTEC pass in science, which is the equivalent of a higher-grade GCSE pass.

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Students join the college with knowledge and skill levels which are usually below those of students in mainstream schools, mostly because their progress has been badly affected by poor attendance or exclusions.
- In Key Stages 2 and 3, teachers plan work carefully to meet individual needs. This means that students can catch up, particularly in the basic skills of English and mathematics. Students make excellent progress in both subjects and when they go back to mainstream school, as most do, they are much more confident and better able to cope with the school curriculum.
- Many students who join the college in Key Stage 4 have made little progress since the end of Key Stage 2, and some may even perform less well than they did at the age of eleven. Most of them start to make excellent progress and almost all leave with recognised qualifications in English, mathematics, science and several other subjects.
- GCSE attainment is below the levels expected nationally, but results in work-related courses such as business studies, travel and tourism and health and social care are broadly in line with national outcomes.
- Early entry to GCSE is used to help motivate students to achieve better results than they thought they could. In the current Year 11 some students have already achieved a Grade C or better in English and mathematics and are working to improve their grades.
- The most able students are set challenging targets based on assessment of their potential as well as their actual attainment. Far more of these students achieve five GCSE passes at grade C or above, including English and mathematics, than do so in most schools of this type. This enables the most able students to apply for higher-level courses and qualifications when they leave the college.
- It was evident in lessons that very good relationships ensure that students learn well and make excellent progress. They make particularly good progress in improving their reading and mathematical skills.
- Their progress in writing, though still very good, has not been quite as good as in reading. Their work in English shows that they are capable of writing accurately at length and for a variety of purposes but in other subjects they get more opportunities to practise their reading skills rather than writing skills.
- Boys and girls, those with particular learning difficulties and disadvantaged students achieve equally well. The college checks carefully that the additional funding is providing the support that disadvantaged students need, and that it helps them to make similar progress to other students.

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	102957
Local authority	Sutton
Inspection number	449463

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	8–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Appropriate authority	The management committee
Chair	Simon Barber
Headteacher	Emma Bradshaw
Date of previous school inspection	30–31 May 2012
Telephone number	020 8652 1500
Fax number	N/A
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