

Alfreton Grange Arts College

Grange Street, Alfreton, Derbyshire DE55 7JA

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2015

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Inadequate
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- Pupils are underachieving in a range of subjects and year groups. Given that pupils' starting points are average, the standards they reach by the end of Year 11 are below average.
- The gaps between different groups within the college are not closing fast enough. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and boys are not making the progress they should in some subjects.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate. Teachers are not using the information they have on pupils to address accurately the weaker learning in their classrooms. They move on to the next bit of learning without making sure that pupils have fully understood what they have just done. Although improving, teaching is too inconsistent.
- Pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement. Pupils do not apply themselves fully when asked to work on their own. Many do not know how to use the freedom given to them to progress their own learning.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement. The interim executive board, created in February 2015, has made several important appointments. Changes made by leaders have had too little time to have a full impact on the quality of teaching, personal development, behaviour and welfare, as well as on the outcomes for pupils, all of which are improving.
- There are no pupils on 16 to 19 study programmes this year. All of those who studied in the sixth form last year moved on to further education, employment or training.

The school has the following strengths

- Leaders in the college have accurately identified the areas for improvement and taken steps to address them. Outcomes across a range of subjects are rising.
- Initiatives started are beginning to improve the quality of teaching, attendance and behaviour across the college.
- The interim executive board (IEB) and head of school have planned for the long-term future of the college and have ensured that staff have access to good and useful professional development.

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the outcomes for all pupils and reduce the gaps more rapidly between boys and girls, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and their peers, by ensuring that teachers:
 - use the information they have on pupils to plan learning that challenges them
 - engage pupils better by capturing their curiosity and enthusiasm through relevant activities
 - check how well pupils are learning and make sure that the findings from this activity are used to decide the next steps for pupils' learning
 - help pupils to develop the skills needed to become successful learners and to make better use of the opportunities provided to them.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - improving weaker teaching and providing opportunities for teachers to explore how to make their teaching effective
 - making sure that new initiatives are understood and routines and expectations to make them successful are followed by everyone
 - ensuring that plans put in place to address the underachievement by boys, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and those studying science have a positive impact
 - ensuring that the extended day is used to secure better achievement and enjoyment by staff and pupils.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Governors and senior leaders last term consulted pupils, staff and parents over a range of new initiatives. This has developed a shared understanding of purpose and focus on securing improvements for pupil outcomes. A list of pledges developed by both staff and pupils is committing them to making improvements. All of this is new and too little time has passed to show a clear impact of these actions, and, as a result, the effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement.
- College leaders have revised roles and appointed senior and middle leaders, starting this academic year, all of whom are eager to use their skills to improve outcomes for pupils. An extension of the college day, a change in the behaviour arrangements and the implementation of new curriculum structures also began this September. The stability of staffing in some areas, particularly in English and mathematics, has been sustained, which is good for pupil progress. The college implemented some changes in the summer term but these had little time to make a big impact on overall outcomes. The college has secured some improvements, but pupils still significantly underachieved in a range of subjects and year groups.
- Steps taken to improve the quality of teaching have been successful, as teachers have had the opportunity to discuss and develop their curriculum with others outside the college who have expertise in marking for external examinations. These developments, alongside regular timetabled meetings for teachers to check the accuracy of their marking, are improving practices and building consistency. Senior leaders have clearly linked teachers' performance to the outcome of pupils they teach and the way they develop their own expertise.
- Senior leaders have accurately analysed the progress of pupils and identified the correct issues to focus on in the college development plan. They have extended the college day and used it to allocate additional time to science in order to address the underachievement in this subject. These actions, alongside the appointment of a new head of science and two new staff, are helping to move the department forward. The new special educational needs coordinator has accurately reviewed the needs of pupils and adjusted the programme and teaching assistant support to match these needs. Regular fortnightly meetings of middle leaders with senior leaders to check on the progress of pupils are helping to identify those at risk of underachieving early in every year group. Senior and middle leaders have a sharp focus on improving the outcomes for all pupils.
- The curriculum, designed to give as many pupils as possible the opportunity to follow English Baccalaureate (English, mathematics, sciences, humanities and languages) courses from Year 9, is supporting better access for all. Four options choices allow pupils to follow this path, and the option of doing vocational courses maintains a wide breadth of courses for all pupils. The curriculum builds enrichment lessons into the day and an end-of-day tutor lesson for homework, catch-up and reading. As a result, more pupils are now reading on a regular basis.
- Assemblies, timetabled enrichment lessons and personal, social and health education days, are helping pupils' understanding of how to stay safe and prepare for life in modern Britain. Pupils are involved in contributing to the running of the college.
- Anti-bullying mentors, in their high-visibility jackets, are around the playground at break and lunchtimes. They speak of a reducing role for them as behaviour is improving. The college council is well structured and meets regularly and has taken on a wider brief this year to include a 'learning focus group'. These initiatives, alongside other opportunities for pupil involvement and reflection at the end of the day, are making a positive contribution to the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- College targets set for pupils are challenging, and progress towards them is monitored six times in the year. Time allocated in the college day for teachers to meet together and review their marking is leading to more accurate identification of underachievement. Although targets are challenging, many pupils, when asked, do not know their targets, conveying a less than aspirational approach to their goals for learning.
- Governors carefully monitor the impact of the use of additional funding received for disadvantaged pupils on a regular basis. This scrutiny is helping to improve the outcomes for these pupils and the gap between them and others nationally is closing.
- A small number of parents who responded to Parent View (Ofsted's online questionnaire) or contacted the inspection team had concerns about a range of issues in the college. Over the two days of the inspection,

inspectors did not find evidence to support these particular parental concerns.

■ **The governance of the school**

- is experienced and knowledgeable about educational matters
- is taking effective action to stabilise the senior and middle leadership of the college. In addition, members of the IEB have appointed a partner to support the college with school improvement
- meets monthly and monitors the effectiveness of actions taken to improve teaching, the behaviour of pupils, outcomes and safeguarding. This regular monitoring is holding senior leaders to account and driving improvement within the college
- checks safeguarding arrangements through visits and listening to parents and pupils
- only rewards those teachers who show a positive impact on pupil outcomes through performance management arrangements
- has negotiated the long-term future of the college and it is due to become a sponsored academy in April 2016.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The head of school and the IEB discuss safeguarding issues as a standard part of their monthly meeting agenda. Training for staff on child protection issues is kept up to date. Pupils have numerous adults they can turn to for support. Pastoral staff engage with external agencies to arrange the best support for pupils when needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

- The college is not meeting the needs of disabled pupils or those with special educational needs and those with weaker learning skills and, as a result, they are making inadequate progress. Consequently, teaching, learning and assessment are inadequate.
- Teachers do not consistently use the information they have on their pupils to plan their lessons. Too often, the work they offer pupils is too easy and the expectations they have of their engagement are too low. Teachers often design lessons so that pupils have opportunities to take an active part in learning, but too many, particularly boys, do not have the skills or experience to do this successfully, resulting in progress stalling.
- Some lessons do not enable all pupils to make the best possible progress. This is especially the case for the most able, who finish their work and have to wait for the others to catch up before moving on. Marking and feedback are not helping the pupils to improve their work. Questioning does not often deepen or further pupils' knowledge.
- When learning is more purposeful, there are positive relationships between teachers and pupils, and teachers establish habits to support learning well. Pupils come into the lessons ready to learn and need little refocusing onto the work prepared. 'Do now' activities at the beginning of lessons catch pupils' attention and support the main content of the lesson. Activities organised by the teachers are interesting and relevant to the pupils. Pupils respond to feedback. Teachers provide appropriate support for those who need it and challenge for those who find the work easy. This secures positive engagement and results in good progress. These strengths were present in a drama lesson where pupils clearly knew what would make their work successful and focused on improving their group's performance.
- Teachers are using new schemes of work and practices, and these are beginning to have a positive impact on progress. Regular 'progress board' meetings held with experienced teachers from outside the college are helping to develop programmes of work for pupils to follow. This system builds in regular testing of pupils and checking of progress. However, sometimes the teaching dwells more on teaching for the testing than on understanding of the subject. This is particularly true for some of the mathematics lessons observed. Pupils are not developing a deep understanding of the subject and struggle to apply their understanding to unfamiliar situations.
- The quality of teachers' feedback to pupils is inconsistent across subjects and year groups. This reduces the confidence with which pupils are able to respond to and benefit from teacher comments. Pupils or their peers often mark homework. However, they rarely use the opportunity to explore the methods they used to complete it to learn from it.
- The quality of support from teaching assistants is variable. Where teachers have identified a clear plan for support, it is effective and helps pupils make progress in line with their peers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The college's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils generally do as asked by teachers and do not disrupt the learning of others. However, too many pupils do not take up the opportunities they have to drive forward their learning. Pupils lack the skills to help them become successful learners. Where teacher expectations are higher and lessons are interesting, pupils engage positively and display good attitudes to learning; regrettably, this is not often the case.
- Pupils are courteous and polite to visitors. They readily greet visitors, hold open doors for them and interact positively when asked questions.
- While the work completed by pupils is often well presented and complete, this is not the case for a significant number of pupils.
- Pupils on alternative provision appreciate the special arrangements made to meet their needs. Teachers support the pupils' personal development well and all progress to further education, employment or training.
- Pupils say they feel safe and know that adults in the school will support them if they have concerns. They know how to stay safe when using new technologies and the internet. They recognise inappropriate words that may be harmful or hurtful to others.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- Teachers are applying a new behaviour policy this academic year. Higher expectations and a greater focus on attitudes to learning raised the number of internal referrals to detention, but these are now slowly decreasing. Pupils say that not all staff are consistently applying the new policy.
- Pupils move sensibly between buildings, but can be too relaxed at the end of breaks resulting in a casual move to lessons. Punctuality for some is an issue first thing in the morning.
- Pupils respect their environment and there is little litter or graffiti.
- Attendance is improving on last year but remains just below the national average of 2014, and the percentage of those persistently absent, while reducing, is still high.

Outcomes for pupils are inadequate

- Too many pupils, given their starting points, have not made the progress that might be expected of them in a range of subjects and year groups because of poor teaching. This is improving, but disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, and pupils studying science, significantly underachieve.
- The pupils who left in Year 11 in the last academic year entered the college with standards in English and mathematics that were in line with the national average. By the end of their studies in Year 11, they achieved standards that were well below average. The progress they made in English, mathematics and other subjects, although an improvement on the previous year, was still well below average and many pupils underachieved. More stable staffing and better teaching have secured improvements in English and mathematics in recent months.
- These improvements, and further professional training for teachers in a range of subjects, are beginning to improve the outcomes for pupils in a wider range of subjects. Senior staff have reviewed the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs as early as possible this term. Arrangements to support better progress are in place, but have not had time to have a full impact on pupils. A scrutiny of these pupils' books shows progress is being made in English but it is poor in mathematics and science.
- The college's tracking of the progress of the present Year 11 pupils suggests significantly improved outcomes. Early entry for pupils in English Literature resulted in levels of progress for this subject rising 12% on the previous year. Lesson observations and book scrutiny across the college suggest that pupils are making progress, but in many cases it is not as strong as it needs to be to address the prior underachievement of pupils.
- New staffing arrangements in a number of curriculum areas are having a positive impact on outcomes. The standards reached in many subjects improved in 2015 and the college expects them to do so again.

this year. The progress of younger pupils is also improving.

- The performance of disadvantaged pupils who left in Year 11 in 2015 improved, but the progress they made remained poor when compared to others nationally. The gap in standards reached in English reduced from two grades behind in 2014 to one grade in 2015 and for mathematics from two-and-a-half grades behind in 2014 to one-and-a-half grades behind in 2015. In both English and mathematics, disadvantaged pupils performed half a grade behind their peers in 2015; however, all pupils underachieved significantly, given their starting points. Levels of progress for disadvantaged pupils are on track to rise further in 2016.
- The most-able pupils are making better progress because of greater challenge and higher expectations of them from teachers. Better coordinated lesson planning and raised expectations are resulting in more pupils working towards top grades, although this is not the case in all subjects.
- Boys are still well behind girls compared with the national gap on a number of measures, but outcomes for all are improving. The college is taking steps to involve boys more and this was evident in a Spanish lesson where boys were enthusiastically responding to the teacher's encouraging and supportive guidance.
- The special educational needs coordinator has reviewed the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and arranged individual programmes of support for them. The proportion of pupils who need this specialised support has decreased and the school is now in a better place to meet their needs. Appropriate training for teaching assistants has taken place and pupils now receive more structured support. However, there has not been enough time for these changes to show in outcomes for pupils, which remain inadequate.
- Pupils attending alternative provision do well given their needs. Individual case studies for this small number of pupils show their placements have ensured that they experience success and all progress to further education, employment or work.
- The advice, information and guidance given to pupils are supporting them in planning their next steps when they leave the college. All pupils progressed to further employment, education or training last year.

School details

Unique reference number	112931
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	10001570

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	464
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	0
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Chris Robinson
Headteacher	Graeme Smith
Telephone number	01773 832331
Website	www.alfretongrange.co.uk/NewWeb
Email address	enquiries@alfretongrange.com
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2013

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported through the pupil premium is much higher than average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- In 2015, the college met the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.
- The college chose to restrict the sixth form intake last year to a one-year course with a view to not enrolling any pupils into the sixth form this year. As a result, there are no pupils enrolled in the college on 16 to 19 study programmes this academic year.
- A small number of pupils are enrolled in alternative provision provided by Derby College, Acorn, Pilsey Community Farm and Groundworks.
- The Department for Education appointed an interim executive board governing body for the college in February 2015. The board appointed a head of school in May 2015. An executive headteacher was appointed at the same time to support the senior leaders on a part-time basis.
- The Torch Gateway Academy Trust was commissioned to support school improvement in the college from spring 2015.
- The college is due to become a sponsored academy in April 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in lessons across a wide range of subjects and year groups between Years 7 to 11. Some observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also visited a number of tutorial sessions and enrichment lessons.
- Inspectors held meetings with pupils, subject leaders and leaders responsible for different aspects of the college's work, the Chair of the IEB, a representative of the local authority and of the Torch Gateway Academy Trust.
- Inspectors looked at the college's self-evaluation of its own performance, its development plans and records of its checks on the quality of teaching, information on pupil progress, attendance and safeguarding documents. Samples of pupils' work were reviewed.
- Inspectors considered the views of 10 parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, over the last two years.

Inspection team

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Dr John Edwards	Ofsted Inspector

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