

Ellesmere College

Braunstone Lane East, Leicester, Leicestershire LE3 2FD

Inspection dates

3–4 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Most pupils, in all stages of their education, make good progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The co-principals and other senior leaders promote a culture where pupils love coming to school and enjoy their learning.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are extremely strong. As a result, pupils thrive.
- Good teaching across a range of subjects and age ranges ensures that pupils make good progress, both in their academic work and in their personal development.
- Parents are pleased with the education their children receive. They receive good-quality information about the progress their children are making.
- School leaders and the governing body are rigorous in ensuring that the arrangements for keeping pupils safe and teaching pupils how to stay safe are effective.
- Leaders invest substantial time in ensuring that the school continues to improve. They check teaching and pupils' progress carefully and respond quickly to any concerns.
- Good early years provision ensures that children and pupils make good progress in all areas of their learning, most particularly in their personal and social development.
- Leaders ensure that pupils in the sixth form benefit from a wide range of learning activities, including access to work experience and alternative provision where appropriate. As a result, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and life.
- The staff team provides pupils with excellent levels of care and support. Staff know pupils very well, and this helps them to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively.
- Teaching, while good overall, does not always ensure that pupils at the earliest stages of their development are making good progress across a range of areas of learning.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the progress of pupils at the earliest stages of their development, across the full age range, is promoted fully by all staff:
 - increasing their expectations of what these pupils can achieve
 - using time in lessons effectively to promote learning
 - sharpening the targets set for these pupils so that staff, pupils and parents are clear when they have been achieved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The co-principals have successfully created a positive culture where staff and pupils feel valued. The staff and inspectors are confident that the co-principals consider what is in the best interests of pupils when making decisions.
- Leaders at all levels work well together. The majority of the school's work is debated, using a model of 'what works well' and 'even better if'. As a result, leaders are able to celebrate the strong work of the school and respond quickly to any weaknesses.
- School leaders, governors and officers of the local authority work very well together. Their common goal is to ensure that pupils receive a high-quality education. This ensures that Ellesmere College continues to improve. The school has increased its age range to include primary-aged pupils since the last inspection. This work has been successful and the new provision for these pupils is good. Leaders appreciate the support and challenge provided by the local authority's officers, which are proportionate and effective.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement. They give effective guidance and support to staff, many of whom are relatively new to the school.
- Leaders have been effective in improving the quality of education provided for pupils since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is kept under regular review. Training and regular, focused observation and feedback by leaders are helping staff to improve their practice to meet increasingly higher expectations.
- Leaders' checks on teaching are carefully cross-referenced to checks on pupils' progress. This information is used to set teachers' annual targets and in planning for school improvement. Leaders make use of rich sources of performance information about the school, such as information on the progress each pupil is making in each area of their learning.
- Leaders have made well-considered choices in spending the funds received through the pupil premium funding and physical education and sport premium. The impact of this work is that disadvantaged pupils make the same good progress as other pupils. The curriculum is further enriched with more opportunities for sport and outdoor activities that widen pupils' experiences and increase their participation. Many of these opportunities are available to all pupils and include, for example, clubs for cycling and music.
- The curriculum is well adapted to pupils' different needs and effectively promotes their interests and talents. The diversity of Leicester's population is celebrated through a variety of learning activities. Visits to local places of interest, assemblies linked to key events and the teaching of religious education combine to ensure that pupils experience good provision in relation to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils have good opportunities to gain essential literacy and numeracy skills throughout their entire time at Ellesmere College.

Governance of the school

- The work of the governing body is effective in ensuring that the school is financially stable, in holding the co-principals to account and in supporting improvement. Governors provide the support and challenge the school needs to succeed.
- Regular meetings of the governing body and meetings between the chair, vice-chair and co-principals ensure that key leaders and governors are fully informed about the school's work.
- The governing body is well organised and governors are sharply focused in managing all aspects of its responsibilities. The governing body takes a rigorous approach to ensuring that the co-principals are held to account for their work.
- Governors collect comprehensive information from the school about the quality of education provided for pupils. They analyse this information rigorously and challenge leaders when the need for improvement arises.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Governors and senior leaders carry out regular checks to make sure pupils are kept safe. High levels of supervision contribute effectively to pupils staying safe, both in and out of school.
- The staff team receives regular training in how to keep children safe. Staff report concerns to the relevant leaders swiftly and have faith in these key staff to respond effectively.
- Weekly meetings of senior leaders to discuss the safety of pupils ensure that the school responds quickly to meet pupils' needs.
- Procedures for the recruitment of staff are effective. The necessary checks are completed on new staff to ensure that they are suitable to work at the school.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Pupils demonstrate high levels of engagement and enjoyment. Staff create an infectious enthusiasm for learning. For example, in an English lesson, the teacher engaged pupils by selecting them to complete work in a 'fun' way, using her 'finger of fate'. Pupils responded brilliantly to the teacher's humour.
- The teaching of phonics is effective because it builds successfully on pupils' prior learning. As a result, pupils make good progress.
- Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively to check pupils' understanding and to develop their learning. A science teacher, for example, used questions to check pupils' understanding of the sugar content of different drinks before they moved on to complete experiments to prove their theories. This approach to questioning was observed throughout the inspection and helps teachers to adapt their lessons to ensure that pupils make good progress.

- Teachers adapt the tasks set for pupils effectively. This is as a result of staff knowing and understanding pupils' needs well. The use of pupils' education, health and care plans, and the rich sources of assessment information collected in the school, firmly guide this planning. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- The most able pupils at Ellesmere College make similar good progress to that of their peers. Good-quality planning alongside high aspirations help to move pupils on in small, incremental steps.
- The relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils trust the staff and usually respond very positively to adult direction and support. Overwhelmingly, pupils told inspectors that they liked the staff they worked with.
- Pupils benefit from the improving communication skills of staff. Considerable work by leaders and staff now results in the effective use of signing and symbols. As a result, pupils better understand the sequence of their days and what is expected of them.
- Where staff have a high level of specialist subject knowledge, teaching is very effective. Strong practice was observed during the teaching of mathematics and physical education. In these subjects, teachers explained a range of strategies to pupils, which they used to support their understanding.
- The feedback teachers give to pupils, both verbally and in their books and work folders, is effective. Pupils' books and folders across a wide range of subjects show the good progress they are making.
- Positive experiences in the classroom mean that pupils generally have positive attitudes to school. The wide range of subjects offered to pupils supports this. The introduction of outdoor learning has further improved pupils' views about their education at Ellesmere College.
- Parents and carers believe that their children receive a good quality of education. They receive regular and accurate information about their child's progress, which helps them to support their child to make good decisions about the future.
- Pupils at the earliest stage of development, across the full age range, are well cared for by a skilled staff team. However, pupils do not always receive the level of challenge in their learning that they could. Some of their targets are too vague and result in lesson time not being used as effectively as it could be.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' confidence during their time at the school increases because of the good teaching they receive and the range of learning they experience in the classroom and through extra-curricular activities, such as playing competitive sport or performing music at other venues.
- The comprehensive programme of activities for developing pupils' skills, knowledge and

understanding in personal, social and health education is effective. For example, pupils learn about the risks they face when using social media.

- Pupils are keen to take on areas of responsibility across the school. These experiences help them to develop their self-awareness. Pupils apply for various positions, such as running the internet café, and fulfil them responsibly.
- Pupils are confident that any form of bullying is acted upon swiftly and effectively by the staff team.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They receive high-quality support from staff that ensures that their behaviour improves as they move through the year groups.
- Incidents of challenging behaviour from pupils are managed well by staff. Staff work effectively together and with parents to devise support plans that are well tailored to individual pupils' complex needs. Consistent application of the strategies has led to a marked reduction in behavioural incidents and a reducing number of exclusions.
- Staff are well trained to manage poor behaviour, including, where necessary, the use of physical intervention. Because they know the pupils well, staff are often able to avoid challenging moments by distracting pupils effectively or by teaching them to find a more positive way to deal with their anxiety.
- Pupils' conduct around school is good. They move around the school sensibly and respect their lovely building and grounds. Lunchtime is a good social occasion that pupils enjoy. They behave well and value the time they spend with their friends.
- Pupils' attendance is generally good. Where an individual pupil's attendance falls below that expected by leaders, the school is quick to respond and put in place strategies to ensure that the pupil receives the education he or she is entitled to.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- School leaders and teachers carefully analyse information about pupils' attainment and progress and use it well to guide the planning of the curriculum and teaching.
- Information provided by school leaders indicates that most pupils are making the progress expected of them across a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Pupils in all year groups make good progress. Leaders make checks throughout the academic year to ensure that pupils are making the progress they should. Assessment information from these checks matched well with the experiences of inspectors.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language or are looked after by the local authority are making at least the progress expected of them. Some are making more progress than other pupils in the school.
- Disadvantaged pupils are making the same progress as other pupils in English and mathematics. Leaders carefully check the progress of this group of pupils and put in

place additional opportunities for pupils to learn more.

- A broad range of accreditations and qualifications is available to pupils. As a result, pupils and their families are clear about the type of course which would provide most benefits in the next stage of their life. In 2016, pupils gained accreditations across 17 subjects, with 224 results being at entry level. A large proportion of older pupils are working towards gaining Level 1 qualifications in mathematics, construction, physical education and environmental studies.
- The pupils who attend alternative provision for part of their education make good progress. Staff from Ellesmere College plan effectively to identify a range of appropriate places and courses for pupils to attend. They ensure that pupils' abilities and skills are well matched to the provision on offer.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life after they leave school. Many are successfully trained to travel independently and this enables them to gain access to community activities and future colleges independently. All pupils go on to positive post-school destinations.

Early years provision

Good

- The provision for children in the early years is well led and managed. The leader has a good understanding of all that should be provided in the early years.
- Leaders make checks on teaching, children's attainment and progress, and on the progress of plans for improvement. These have resulted in positive changes to the way in which children's education is delivered, for example through their access to a wider range of activities, both inside and outside the classroom.
- Children have increasing opportunity to choose their activities and move between areas. They enjoy doing this and like the attention staff give them throughout the day. Children become increasingly independent and, as a result, are well prepared for their move to Year 1.
- Links with parents are strong. Staff encourage parents to use the same familiar strategies at home as are used at school. Staff take account of information from families when planning learning activities.
- Assessment of children's learning is thorough. Teachers and teaching assistants are constantly using technology to record children's progress. Records build up a comprehensive picture of each child's progress in all areas of learning, and this is used effectively to plan their next steps in learning.
- Teaching is good. Staff get to know children well and quickly develop positive relationships with them. These relationships support improved communication and behaviour. Teachers and teaching assistants frequently use conversations and discussions to promote the speech and language skills of children.
- The curriculum is personalised and matched well to children's levels of understanding. Questioning is used effectively, giving pupils the opportunity to think problems through.

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Pupils enjoy learning in their 16 to 19 study programmes. They now play a fuller part in selecting accredited courses and are becoming increasingly independent in making these choices. As a result, 16 to 19 programmes are increasingly personalised to the pupils' needs and aspirations. Outcomes are positive.
- Leaders are effective in maintaining a positive culture in which pupils make good progress across a range of subjects and activities. Pupils make equally good progress in academic and vocational parts of the curriculum.
- Staff are effective at encouraging pupils to develop their levels of personal independence. Several older pupils provide effective support to younger pupils with their daily routines in school.
- Staff keep pupils' progress under close scrutiny and teachers use this information to plan lessons based on pupils' previous learning. The intended outcomes contained within education, health and care plans are taken into account when planning activities.
- Teaching is generally good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and their learning. Teachers' attempts to link learning to pupils' lives outside school have become a growing strength.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils, and among pupils, mean that pupils become more self-confident and increasingly aware of their own capabilities. This helps them to make good decisions about the future.
- Pupils benefit from opportunities to take part in work experience. Considerable thought is given to how this happens for each pupil and it is personalised to meet their future aspirations.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and their attitudes to their learning are positive. Pupils listen carefully to instructions and follow routines as necessary.
- The range of activities on offer prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. Independent advice and guidance are offered to pupils and their families through the local Connexions service. Pupils and staff report that this input is highly effective. Transition arrangements are well thought through and pupils feel well supported. All pupils move on to positive destinations, usually at one of the local colleges.

School details

Unique reference number	130371
Local authority	Leicester
Inspection number	10031118

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	4 to 19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in 16 to 19 study programmes	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	251
Of which, number on roll in 16 to 19 study programmes	69
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Steve White
Principal	Lisa Pittwood Lin Richardson (co-principals)
Telephone number	0116 289 4242
Website	www.ellesmerecollege.org.uk
Email address	office@ellesmere.leicester.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	14 May 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school caters for pupils who have a wide range of special educational needs and/or disabilities from Leicester and Leicestershire. All pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. A growing number of pupils have a diagnosis of autism, and a few have additional hearing or multi-sensory

impairments.

- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is above the national average.
- The school caters for pupils from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The school uses the following alternative provision: Brolay Farm; Trans4m; Youth Education Project (YEP); HITZ; and VTEC/Environmental Studies.
- The school has links with a wide range of external agencies through its specialist subject of sport. The school leads on disability sport in Leicester and Leicestershire.
- The school moved into new premises in September 2014. At this point, the school started to admit primary-age pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in lessons for pupils of all ages. The majority of these observations were conducted jointly with a senior leader. During lesson observations, inspectors sampled pupils' books and talked with pupils to evaluate the standard of their work and the progress they have been making.
- Inspectors observed the behaviour of pupils during lesson observations, on entry to school, as they moved around school during the day and at lunchtime. Inspectors joined pupils for lunch in the dining hall.
- Inspectors held a number of meetings with senior leaders, leaders in charge of subjects, other teachers, support staff, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of pupils' work in books and files across a range of subjects.
- The inspection team looked at a wide range of the school's documentation, including records of meetings, action plans, records showing how leaders check the quality of teaching, policies, information on pupils' progress towards their targets and the school's own evaluation of its performance.
- Inspectors took into account the school's own surveys about parents' views. They also took account of five responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and 38 responses to an online questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Phil Harrison, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Linda Lyn-Cook

Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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