

Birley Community College

Birley Lane, Birley, Sheffield, S12 3BP

Inspection dates 16–17 May 2013

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students' achievement is not secure in key subjects, particularly in science but also in mathematics.
- Students known to be eligible for free school meals are not achieving as well as they should.
- Teaching is not consistently good across all subjects. Over time, teaching has not been sufficiently challenging to raise achievement at a fast enough rate.
- Students' behaviour is not consistently good overall and does not sufficiently contribute to rapid student progress in all lessons.
- Students' attendance is below the national average and rates of persistent absence remain too high.
- School leaders have not yet delivered improvements in subject areas that have underperformed over time.

The school has the following strengths

- Overall GCSE results improved in 2012 compared to previous years. Achievement in humanities and English is good.
- Through their intervention, school leaders have improved the quality of teaching in some subject areas in recent months.
- The school ensures that students are safe. Students in the school's Integrated Resource Unit are well looked after.
- The governing body and school leaders have a clear strategic vision for the school's future and are determined to engage effectively with the school's community. Consequently, cross-federation planning is strong.
- School leaders know what must to be done to improve the school and their actions are already resulting in improvements in outcomes for middle-attaining students.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons or parts of lessons taught by 41 teachers. Three lessons were jointly observed by inspectors and members of the school's senior leadership group.
- Meetings were held with three groups of students, members of the governing body, a representative from Sheffield Local Authority, and senior and middle leaders.
- During the inspection, inspectors heard students read, scrutinised students' work in lessons, monitored the behaviour of students during and between lessons, and inspected the work of the school's specialist provision for autistic students.
- School leaders decided not to distribute the optional staff survey provided by Ofsted.
- Inspectors considered a sample of 50 responses to Parent View. They also considered the views of a few parents who contacted the inspection team directly.
- Inspectors reviewed school documentation and policies including school-improvement plans, minutes of the meeting of the governing body, the school's own data on achievement and student tracking, logs of behaviour and attendance.
- Documents that relate to the safeguarding of students at Birley Community College were reviewed.

Inspection team

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Additional Inspector

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Full report

Information about this school

- Birley Community College is a larger-than-average secondary school. The community college is accommodated in new buildings which it has occupied fully since September 2012.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is similar to the national average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium is broadly average (The pupil premium is additional funding for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after).
- The school offers specialist facilities for students with autism. This provision is called the Integrated Resource Unit.
- The proportion of students supported at school action is above the national average while the proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is much higher. This group of students includes those with severe learning difficulties, moderate learning difficulties, and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.
- Birley Community College is part of The Birley Learning Community and is in hard federation with Birley Community Primary School. This means that the two schools share the same campus, leadership and governance.
- The school makes use of a number of off-site providers including principally, The Sheffield Engineering Centre, Heeley City Farm, In-Touch Care, Recycle, In2Change, A4E, Sprint, and Abbeydale Fisheries. A very few students attend these providers on a part time or extended basis.
- The school meets the current floor standards set out by the government as the minimum expectation for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- To raise the effectiveness of teaching to consistently good or better in order to accelerate progress and raise standards for students of all abilities by:-
 - refining new school systems to track students' progress so that all teachers plan lessons that are challenging
 - making sure marking and assessment lets students know the steps that they must take to improve their work to extend their learning
 - further developing students' literacy so that all students are confident readers.
- Improve student behaviour and attendance so that learning proceeds at a greater pace by:-
 - ensuring behavioural management strategies are applied consistently and poor behaviour challenged
 - further employing attendance incentives and challenging parents whose children are persistently absent from school.
- Ensure governors and school leaders secure improvements in teaching, particularly in science but also in mathematics, and for those eligible for additional pupil-premium funding through:-
 - embedding a school-wide culture of aspiration and further challenging or supporting those teachers whose classes are not already consistently good or better
 - monitoring the effectiveness of improvement plans to evaluate with greater scrutiny their impact on outcomes for key classes and groups of students.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because there is too much variation between subjects and it is not consistently good in science and mathematics.
- Students arrive at Birley Community College with attainment that is broadly in line or marginally below that of students nationally. They leave the school with attainment that is broadly average with national standards. They make good progress and achieve particularly well in English, geography, and design and technology.
- Overall improvements were seen in the percentage of students attaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, between 2011 and 2012. This meant that Year 11 students at Birley Community College did marginally better than students elsewhere nationally last year.
- While attainment in English and mathematics has improved in recent months, large numbers of students taking science have underperformed over time, both in comparison to other subjects at the school and national averages for science. Despite clear strategies for improving results in science now being in place, it is too early to judge the impact of these actions for results in 2013.
- The school is in the process of reviewing and improving its tracking of students' performance. These innovations are relatively new and while progress in English seems set to improve in 2013, this seems less securely the case for science and mathematics.
- The progress of students receiving additional funding through the pupil premium requires improvement. In 2012, students known to be eligible for free school meals formed approximately 22% of Year 11. The average point score and the proportion making expected progress was much lower than found nationally for this group. However, the gap between these students and others in the school is shown to be narrowing in current school data. It shows the school's positive commitment to equality of opportunity.
- As part of the school's curriculum review, school leaders have amended the school's policy on early entry to GCSE examinations to allow greater opportunity for the more-able students to access the higher grades.
- School data for the small number of the students attending alternative off-site provision show them achieving Level 2 qualifications in a range of subjects where they complete the course. Attendance for some of these students is sometimes lower than the school's overall attendance rate, which itself requires improvement.
- The number of students who, at the conclusion of their education, do not enter employment, education and/or training is very low and compares favourably with similar schools.
- Students with special education needs, including those attached to the Integrated Resource Unit make broadly expected progress overall. However, this is not the case in mathematics for special needs students without a statement of special educational needs, where in 2012 they did less well than expected.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because although evidence of good or better teaching was seen, inspectors found too much variation in the quality of teaching they observed, and that teaching over time in particularly in science but also in mathematics requires improvement.
- This school's own analysis of teaching shows an improving trend over recent months.
- The best lessons were characterised by high levels of student participation, a quick pace to learning, strong relationships between teachers and students, and varied activities that met the needs of individual students. This included those students with special educational needs.
- For example, in an outstanding Key Stage 3 English lesson, students learnt about aspects of poetry by searching for clues in the classroom. The students' excellent behaviour allowed them

to quickly cover the well pitched content planned by their teacher, who worked effectively with a teaching assistant, to stretch all students.

- A feature of better teaching in the school was the checking of students' progress at regular intervals in order to make sure gaps in their knowledge were quickly addressed. In such cases, books were regularly marked with comments that signposted for students the steps they should take to improve.
- Many teachers have good curriculum knowledge and show enthusiasm for their subject. The best teachers were seen to probe students' understanding at regular intervals during lessons to make sure they understood the work. They listened to students with sensitivity.
- In too many weaker lessons, students' work was found to lack challenge and students of all abilities were not sufficiently extended in order to make adequate progress. The marking of work was poor and books seldom corrected. In such instances, these books frequently contained graffiti and the coverage of knowledge and key concepts was inconsistent. Consequently, teachers' planning did not sufficiently meet the needs of individual students.
- A common feature of lessons that required improvement or that were occasionally weak, was students' poor behaviour. Too often students lost interest in their work for extended periods or distracted others from their study. This was ineffectively challenged by the teacher.
- The positive contribution of teaching assistants to the most effective lessons meant that students attached to the Integrated Resource Unit, and others with special educational needs, made equal or better progress than other pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- While inspectors observed many examples of polite and courteous behaviour, concerns were raised by some students and a few parents and other adults about the poor behaviour of students at school.
- Although the proportion of parents responding to Parent View was very small compared to the number of students on roll, the majority of contributors disagreed or strongly disagreed that students were well behaved in the school.
- Inspectors found that in some classes, students' passive or low-level misbehaviour reduced the effectiveness of teaching. This meant that students did not make the progress expected in these lessons.
- The school has clear strategies for managing the behaviour of students, but these are not applied consistently by all teachers.
- In lessons that were judged to be good or better, more often than not students' positive attitudes to learning were a strong feature. For example, in a Year 11 class, students worked calmly, independently and in small groups, on revision for a forthcoming science examination. They took notes in a variety of ways, used information and communication technology, and tested one another on what they had learnt.
- Students' conduct around the school campus is generally orderly and inspectors observed they mostly responsibly manage the use of their mobile phones, which are permitted on site for learning purposes. However, a very few students were seen smoking between lessons and attendance to the start of some lessons was not prompt.
- Students report that they are aware of the different forms that bullying may take and they know from whom they may seek support from in school. School records indicate that bullying is monitored and dealt with promptly.
- School attendance is currently below the national average. Persistent absence has been high compared with national rates. The school is becoming more effective in the way in which it is dealing with non-attendance and has arrested the decline so that attendance for non-special educational needs students is showing gradual incremental improvement. However, attendance for students with special educational needs remains high compared to other groups in the school.
- Rates of exclusion have fallen considerably in recent years. The use of a school 'inclusion room'

has contributed to the reduction of fixed-term exclusions. There were no permanent exclusions in 2012.

- Students attached to the school's Integrated Resource Unit report they felt safe and that any instance of bullying was rare and dealt with promptly by the school. Behaviour in the Integrated Resource Unit is good because staff have created a nurturing learning environment.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- While leaders and managers have introduced systematic approaches to developing teaching and raising achievement, many of these are relatively recent and so have not secured consistently good teaching or achievement across all subjects.
- School leaders hold an accurate and honest view of the school's strengths and those aspects of the school where improvement is most needed. They use their evaluation to formulate sound plans for the school's development but do not always measure the impact of these actions with sufficient scrutiny.
- Senior leaders have made a start on successfully tackling underperformance in teaching where most required. For example, this has improved teaching in science in recent months.
- Recent systematic reviews of a number of subject areas are starting to prove effective, for example, leading to additional training of some staff. Although clear areas for improvement have been identified, subsequent checks have not always been made to ensure consistent responses to key action points, for example, in the marking of work and feedback offered to students.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 3 and 4 is suitable for most students' needs. The school is currently reviewing and modifying the current offer to students and secure plans are in place to modify the curriculum for September 2013.
- Provision for the social, moral and cultural development of students is stronger than that for their spiritual development. Opportunities are provided for a wide variety of sporting and cultural enrichment activities including a talent contest of which students spoke positively.
- The school actively encourages literacy through, to give one example, enrichment activities that promote writing in the community. Inspectors observed a variety of lessons across subjects where students had the opportunity to read, although in a few instances students' reading lacked sufficient fluency or comprehension for their age.
- Working with the local authority, the school has made some judicious decisions about the additional support it has commissioned for the school's further improvement, particularly in relation to raising the quality of teaching. Training programmes to develop leadership at all levels are a strong component of teachers' performance management and professional development.
- Aspects of leadership of the Integrated Resource Unit are good, most notably the clear direction the new leader in this area is giving to raising achievement. However, it is too early to see the impact of current leadership and management in the Integrated Resource Unit and the need to review the effectiveness of teaching and staffing is recognised by the school.
- Statutory requirements are met in relation to the safeguarding of students. The safeguarding of students accessing alternative and off-site provision is appropriately monitored by the school.
- A number of respondents to the Parent View questionnaire indicated concern about aspects of the school, including its leadership. Inspectors find that the school has the capacity for future improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a realistic appraisal of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including teaching, and hold senior leaders to account with a high degree of challenge.
 - Pupil-premium funding and that for Year 7 Catch Up is appropriately used, for example, to increase support staffing for eligible students. Governors are aware of the need to better judge for themselves the impact of this spending on improving students' achievement and are using school data with a higher degree of accuracy. In restructuring management responsibilities, governors and school leaders are actively reducing the number of promoted

posts so that performance and pay are more closely related to the school's performance-management processes.

- Governors have worked well with school leaders to ensure that the planned move into newly built accommodation has progressed efficiently and minimised any detrimental impact on the school. They demonstrate a willingness to engage with the school's community and offer a strategic vision of their work across all phases of the federation to improve outcomes.

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	107146
Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	403738

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eric Holmes
Headteacher	Steve Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	1 February 2010
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