

Witchford Village College

Manor Road, Witchford, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 2JA

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Not previously inspected | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Students achieve well in both English and mathematics. They also make good progress in a range of other subjects across the school.
- Teaching over time and in all year groups is consistently good. Lessons engage students because they are given the opportunity to apply what they are learning actively.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with pupils, enabling them to make good progress.
- Students behave well. This is true both in lessons and also during their social time and when they move around the school. They have positive attitudes and want to learn.
- Leaders and managers along with the school's governors have made a strong impact on the quality of teaching and on the progress students make because they assess the quality of teaching and learning accurately and base their plans to improve the school on a deep understanding of its work.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The achievement of lower-ability boys in mathematics is not consistently strong enough.
- Some teaching does not provide enough opportunities for students to be active in applying their own learning.
- Senior leaders do not ensure that the school's programme to develop the spiritual, moral social and cultural aspects of the students' education is well enough planned to make sure that all students benefit from this as fully as they ought.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors visited 34 lessons, of which four were joint observations with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, school leaders and managers, teachers and support staff, the Chair and three other members of the Governing Body, groups of students, and a representative from the academy trust.
- The views of the 46 parents who responded to the online questionnaire (Parent View) were considered, along with the views of those who spoke to the inspectors during the inspection via the telephone, or from whom they received correspondence.
- The inspection team observed the school’s work, scrutinised the school’s data about students’ achievement, examined records relating to behaviour and attendance, and looked at documents used by leaders to monitor and evaluate the school’s performance. It also examined the work in students’ books and the homework set by teachers.
- Inspectors observed students as they moved around school at break and lunchtimes and when they were assisted in small groups or on a one-to-one basis.

Inspection team

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| James McAtear, Lead inspector | Additional Inspector |
| Heather Housden | Additional Inspector |
| David Wolfson | Additional Inspector |
| David Belsey | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Witchford Village College is a smaller-than-average secondary school with a specialism in physical education.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in the care of the local authority, those known to be eligible for free school meals and those with a parent in the armed services, is well below that found nationally.
- Fewer than one in 10 students are from minority ethnic groups and very few speak English as an additional language.
- Witchford Village College converted to become an academy school on 1 October 2011. When its predecessor school, Witchford Village College, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below that found nationally. The proportion of students supported through school action is above average, while the proportion supported on school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is just below average.
- A few students attend City of Ely Community College to study Hair and Beauty at Diploma level.
- The school has a specially resourced unit for students with special educational needs. Eight students attend this specialist unit for those on the autistic spectrum. Students from across the County come to this specialist unit at Witchford Village College.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum level expected for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve achievement in mathematics for less-able boys by:
 - raising students' levels of literacy further, both in mathematics and in other subjects, to assist their understanding of the work they are given.
- Make the quality of teaching outstanding by:
 - ensuring that the methods teachers use always provide enough opportunities for students to be active in applying what they are learning to their own work instead of being passive in lessons.
- Strengthen leadership by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders implement a plan to improve the quality and extent to which the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of the students is developed.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When students join the school in Year 7, they are usually working at similar levels to those found nationally, although there is variation from year group to year group. Rates of progress in mathematics and in English compare favourably with national averages by the time students reach the end of Year 11. Students' achievement in other subjects has improved and is usually strong. For example, students who study languages made good progress during 2012.
- In 2012 overall, Year 11 students attained above-average standards in GCSE examinations. The proportion of students achieving five A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and mathematics, improved on the previous year's results to be well in line with national averages.
- In 2011, the attainment in English of students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding was around a GCSE grade below that of their classmates. In 2012, both groups achieved similar levels in English. In mathematics, the gap in attainment reduced from almost two grades below that attained by other students in 2011 to slightly less than one grade in 2012. These students still make less progress overall than their peers in the school, but the gap between these two groups is narrowing rapidly. The school spends the extra money effectively to provide individual and small-group tuition to ensure the levels of literacy of these students allows them to read well enough to learn well across all subjects in the school.
- Students for whom the school receives Year 7 catch up funding, which is provided to assist those who did not attain Level 4 in English by the end of Year 6, make rapid progress with both reading and numeracy. This is because the school uses the funding it receives well, spending this on an extensive programme to develop reading skills.
- The school makes limited use of early entry to GCSE examinations. This has had no negative effect on the levels of achievement of students of any ability level – including the more able.
- The small percentage of students studying courses such as hair and beauty at college achieve well. These subjects are well suited to these students' interests as they help them to make progress and learn in detail about careers in these areas. The school's senior staff monitor their progress at college closely; these students are well supported by other adults who assist the teachers and the students' attendance on these courses is good.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is variable from year to year. Although some of these students do not attain equivalent standards to those of other students in their year group, current data held by the school indicate that progress for these students is now improving. The inspection endorsed this perspective. Students attending the school's specialist unit make consistently good progress and achieve well.
- Less-able boys do not make consistently strong progress in mathematics nor, sometimes, in other subjects. They are hindered in their learning by their lower levels of literacy, although the school is succeeding in improving these.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because teachers plan lessons that take account of students' different abilities and use how much the students already know in planning learning. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects but are also committed to making sure students learn to the best of their

ability. The quality of teaching in English and in some mathematics lessons is particularly effective.

- Additional help is given to students who may have fallen behind in their work or for those who are anxious to learn more and want to achieve more highly. Teachers often do this outside the normal timetable. Students appreciate this support and speak highly of the commitment their teachers show towards them.
- Teachers demonstrate consistently high levels of skill in their teaching. For example, they use questions skilfully to make sure students really understand what they are learning and require them to explain why an answer is correct. For instance, in one Year 11 mathematics lesson the teacher asked the students to list all the things they found difficult in recent lessons and adapted his teaching to make certain that all students fully understood the key concepts behind the topic. However, teaching is not always fully effective in enabling students to manage the literacy levels needed to understand the implications of problems stated in words in mathematics.
- Teaching assistants work well with the individual students and small groups they support in classes – including with disabled students and those who have special educational needs. They maintain excellent relationships with students and are an effective source of encouragement and help to those they work with. They are active in class and apply good judgement in helping students to grasp the key ideas taught during lessons. They work well along with the teachers to ensure that students in the specialist unit for autism are taught well.
- Although teachers plan learning thoroughly, they do not always make sure students are consistently engaged as there is a lack of variety in the way they are taught in some lessons. Where teaching is less effective, students of all ability levels tend to be passive during lessons. Anxiety on the part of teachers to manage behaviour means that students are not expected to be active enough in applying what they are learning independently in their own work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students behave well in lessons. This is because the school has strengthened its systems for dealing with poor behaviour and students are clear on what is expected of them. The vast majority of teachers manage behaviour skilfully and are able to maintain positive relationships with students. Attitudes to learning are usually good.
- Students recognise and respond to the very best teaching with particular enthusiasm. The school uses its specialism in physical education well to enhance students' learning opportunities beyond those timetabled and their participation rates in sporting activities are high.
- The behaviour of students as they move around the school, during social times and when they represent the school on trips and other visits in the community is good. The behaviour of the students in the school's special unit is also good. These students are supported by the high quality of care provided by staff.
- Students say they feel safe in the school and the overwhelming majority of their parents agree. They are taught effectively about the range of dangers they may face, including those presented by the internet, fire, electricity and water. They receive practical and accurate advice on keeping safe and their teachers and other adults support and care for them well.
- Currently, levels of attendance are broadly average and rising. Persistent absence is rare. The

school takes good care of students who need more help. Students are punctual in getting to school and in moving from lesson to lesson.

- Bullying is uncommon. Students understand the various forms it can take, like homophobic or racist bullying. They express confidence that their teachers and other adults in the school will listen to their concerns and act quickly to support them should problems arise in this area.
- Students are active in the life of the school. They work well together to support local and international charities but they also contribute to the direction the school is taking. For example, the 'student executive' meet regularly with the headteacher and ensure that school managers are kept up to date on what life is like for students in the school.
- The school's values and attitudes are positive and friendly. Teachers and students speak to each other respectfully and almost all students are courteous and mannerly. In the few cases where there is a little disruption, the school deals with this effectively. Students, parents and the majority of staff agree with inspectors that behaviour is good in the school.

The leadership and management are good

- Examination results and the quality of teaching have improved because the school's leaders and managers have addressed any poor performance in teaching. They have a detailed knowledge of the school and have used this to make sure their plans to improve the school are based firmly on their informed understanding of priorities. As a result, the school is good and is continuing to improve.
- The school's arrangements for managing teachers' performance are effective. The guidance teachers receive on managing behaviour and improving teaching is clear and helpful. Staff and parents think, correctly, that the school is well led and managed.
- The school provides a curriculum that is well balanced across main subjects. Learning opportunities are successfully matched to students' individual learning needs, interests and aspirations for future careers. Its partnerships with other institutions, like Cambridge Regional College based at the Ely College site, have been successful in making sure students have access to study both academic and vocational subjects.
- Aspects of the provision the school makes to develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural education of its students are not weak and there are some examples of activities which have been very successful in broadening the horizons of the students. The exchange visits which are carried out to a partner school in Germany are a good example of this. However, these activities are not well enough planned to make sure that all students' personal development fully benefits because this area of school's work has not yet been raised to a high enough level.
- The academy trust has been able to ensure that the resources available to the school are used effectively and provide good value for money. The school continues to work well with other local schools, especially in supporting students with special educational needs who benefit from the well-led specialist provision the school offers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is good. Governors know the school well. They are able to explain how pupil premium funding is spent but also the impact this is having in narrowing the gap in attainment in examinations between these students and their classmates. Governors understand and are

able to describe areas of strength and areas for improvement in the teaching that occur within the school. They support school leaders in their robust approach to managing staff performance, particularly in linking salary to the quality of teachers' work. They show a high level of commitment to providing support and challenge to the school. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met, including for students' safety.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| 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

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| Unique reference number | 137547 |
| Local authority | Cambridgeshire |
| Inspection number | 412848 |

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

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| Type of school | Academy converter |
| School category | Non-maintained |
| Age range of pupils | 11–16 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 703 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Sandra Thompson |
| Headteacher | David Taylor |
| Date of previous school inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 01353 662053 |
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