

Cromwell Community College

Wenny Road, Chatteris, PE16 6UU

Inspection dates 10–11 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected as an academy	
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Sixth form provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils and boys is too low.
- The quality of teaching is too variable across the college. The good practice that exists in some classrooms is not widespread enough and this means that pupils' experience of school is too mixed.
- The feedback and guidance that pupils receive is also variable. In some classes, pupils' work is barely marked while in others teachers provide pupils with a very secure understanding of what to do in order to improve.
- Teachers' assessment is not accurate enough in Key Stage 3. As a result, leaders are unable to gather information about how well pupils are doing with confidence.
- The roles of subject and faculty leaders are not clearly enough defined; some of them are not effectively holding teachers to account.
- Achievement in the sixth form is improving but has been too low in recent years. Leadership has not been effective enough and this has led to inconsistencies and a lack of ambition among some teachers.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They feel safe and are very proud of the college. Pupils are developing good levels of independence and have positive attitudes to their learning.
- The new leadership team, in place since September 2014, have made important improvements to the quality of teaching. Their improvement plans are already leading to better achievement in some subjects.
- Governors have reviewed the way that they work with school leaders and are now more focused on the school's core work.
- The college prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain. The curriculum is enriched by good opportunities for the personal development of all pupils.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils’ learning in 37 lessons. Several of these observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors observed behaviour in lessons and around the site during walks around the academy.
- Inspectors analysed documentation, including that relating to: attendance, exclusions, safeguarding, behaviour, the academy’s systems for monitoring teaching and learning, and details of its use of additional funding to support disadvantaged students.
- Inspectors held meetings with the Principal, other senior and subject leaders, teaching staff, the academy’s child protection officer, members of the governing body and groups of pupils and students in the sixth form.
- Inspectors scrutinised a selection of pupils’ books and also looked at their work in lessons.
- Inspectors took account of 188 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View. They also took into account the views of the 65 members of staff who completed a questionnaire about the academy.

Inspection team

Christopher Moodie, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

David Hutton

Additional Inspector

Martin Brown

Additional Inspector

Helena Mills

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cromwell Community College converted to become an academy on 1 June 2012. When its predecessor school of the same name was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- This is a larger than average-sized secondary academy with a sixth form.
- The proportion of students known to be disadvantaged, and therefore supported through the pupil premium, is slightly below average at 23%. The pupil premium funding is additional government funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, at around 9%, is above average.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A new Principal and Vice Principal were appointed last year and started work at the college in September 2014.
- The academy uses the following provider for alternative provision: The College of West Anglia (Construction and Engineering).

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of the following groups:
 - disadvantaged pupils
 - boys
 - students in the sixth form, and especially those following vocational courses.
- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that assessment of pupils' work and progress in Key Stage 3 is more accurate
 - providing pupils with clear guidance on how to improve in all subjects
 - making sure that all teachers have high expectations of the presentation of pupils' work.
- Improve leadership by:
 - ensuring that subject and faculty leaders have more impact on the quality of teaching
 - holding teachers in the sixth form more effectively to account for students' achievement.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new Principal and Vice-Principal have quickly identified the most important issues which need improvement. They have focused on raising the quality of teaching and have assembled a team of senior leaders whose roles are now clearly defined. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving.
- An overwhelming majority of teachers and support staff who responded to the staff questionnaire were positive about the new leaders and valued the changes that have been made recently.
- Faculty leaders and subject leaders are not effective enough. Although there is some good teaching within most subjects, the checks that these leaders are making on the quality of teaching and how well pupils are learning are not done with sufficient rigour or urgency. This means that senior leaders are trying to do this work and their time and energy are spread too thinly.
- The pupil premium funding is not spent effectively enough because attainment gaps are narrowing too slowly for this group. Interventions that are in place are monitored for their impact but the targets that this group of pupils are set are not aspirational enough.
- The college has a curriculum that suits the needs of the pupils. It provides an appropriate balance of vocational and academic courses. The requirements of the new National Curriculum are being phased into all subjects for Key Stage 3 this year.
- Senior leaders have high expectations of pupils and promote equality well. A good range of opportunities are provided for pupils to develop a better understanding of both Britain and the world: overseas trips are popular and the school also organises study visits within the United Kingdom. Leaders have prioritised ensuring that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The college's systems and procedures to safeguard pupils meet statutory requirements. The college checks that staff and visitors are suitably checked.
- Leaders have made effective use of external consultants to moderate their own views of the college's effectiveness. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate, and this means that improvement planning is tackling the right areas. Since the appointment of the new senior leaders there have been many changes. Expectations of the standard of teaching are now higher. Many of these changes are at an early stage of implementation and it is too early to measure and evaluate their impact.
- Leaders have provided sufficient time for college staff to monitor the progress, attendance and behaviour of those pupils who attend alternative provision.
- Leaders make use of an increasingly broad range of information to manage the performance of teachers. A new monitoring system has very recently been implemented to improve the way that this information is presented, making it easier for leaders to analyse.
- The college's information, advice and careers guidance has recently been reviewed and improved. A thorough programme is now in place and pupils are better informed about their choices. For example, the advice that Year 11 pupils received about their choices in the sixth form was much clearer last year and this has reduced the number of students who have left or changed their courses.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance is improving. In the autumn term 2014, the governing body commissioned an external consultant to review the ways that they work. Governors now have an action plan to tackle the areas of improvement that were identified during this review.
 - Governors are focusing more sharply on holding college leaders to account for the quality of teaching. They are beginning to ask the 'right' questions about pupils' performance more frequently but have yet

to prioritise their efforts into ensuring that additional funding provided for disadvantaged pupils results in the attainment gaps narrowing.

- Governors have a clear understanding about the college's strengths and weaknesses. They say that the information they receive from the Principal about the college's work is now straightforward and easy to understand.
- Governors now regularly attend, and contribute to, leadership meetings so that they are better understand how the college's leadership systems are operating.
- The governing body carry out their statutory duties. They check that college leaders complete the annual review of teachers' pay.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is overwhelmingly positive. Lessons get off to a prompt start because pupils are punctual and are quick to settle. Little time is wasted in managing behaviour and low-level disruption is uncommon. On those occasions where pupils do not conform to the college rules, effective action is taken and learning proceeds.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work are equally positive. They want to learn and are enthusiastic about their time at the college. During formal and informal discussions with inspectors, pupils were very keen to speak of how proud they are of their college.
- The good standard of behaviour is sustained during break and lunch times and at lesson changeovers. Pupils move around the college calmly and quietly. They are thoughtful, holding doors open for one another and quickly volunteering to help where they can. There is very little litter around the college and pupils take good care of the facilities and environment. This helps to create a strong sense of community within the college, which is highly valued by parents, pupils and staff alike.
- Pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. They enjoy the opportunities that their Personal Development lessons provide to learn about, and discuss, topical and important moral issues. The impact of this is demonstrated in the way that they are considerate to, and tolerant of, one another. For example, pupils in Year 10 spoke of the impact of a day which focused on the impact of homophobic bullying.
- Pupils are aware that bullying can take many forms and have confidence that when bullying does occur it will be tackled by staff. One pupil told inspectors that 'bullies have no chance at Cromwell'. They report that there is little name-calling in the college and that pupils generally get on very well. The overwhelming majority of parents and members of staff who responded to questionnaires state that bullying is effectively dealt with.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with national levels. It has dipped recently due to the long-term absence of a very small number of pupils who the college are working with in order to tackle this.
- The levels of exclusion are below the national averages for a secondary school. The college's preferred policy involves internal exclusion, enabling pupils to carry on learning despite being outside normal lessons. Leaders have raised the expectations of behaviour since September and this resulted in more internal exclusions. The level is now reducing as pupils respond to the new approach.

Safety

- The college's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- A well-structured Personal Development Programme that promotes pupils' awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe supplements the college's curriculum, including when they are using the internet or social media.

- Pupils who may find discussing some issues difficult because, perhaps, of their personal circumstances can opt out of specific Personal Development lessons. College staff deal with these issues sensitively and provides alternative lessons and counselling if necessary.
- Of the 188 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, 94% stated that their child feels safe at college.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is variable between classes and between subjects. The quality ranges from being consistently good to needing significant support. Leaders have successfully tackled the small amount of inadequate teaching that was in the college. The majority of teaching promotes steady learning but this means that, in some lessons, key groups of pupils are underachieving.
- Teachers' skills in precisely assessing how well pupils are doing in Key Stage 3 are under-developed. Some work to improve this has begun. In the English department, for example, the leaders are becoming more effective in checking the accuracy of other English teachers' assessments. Despite this, some pupils' work is still assessed over-generously and this means that, where this happens, teachers are unable to pitch the level of work carefully enough.
- The way that teachers provide pupils with feedback about their work varies too much. Pupils in some classes receive a very good level of feedback and guidance about their work. This is not restricted to the marking of pupils' work and includes verbal feedback, testing and peer or self-assessment. Where this is effective, pupils talk with confidence about what they need to do to improve.
- In contrast, some books looked at during the inspection had not been marked or assessed for some time. In these books, basic errors such as incorrect spelling of common words or the absence of capital letters and full stops go unchallenged. Pupils told inspectors that there are a small number of teachers who provide little information about how they are doing.
- Some teachers do not have high enough expectation of the way that pupils present their work. This means that, where teachers' expectations are high, pupils' presentation is exemplary. However, where expectations are low, some pupils' work is untidy. The quality of pupils' handwriting is also too variable. Pupils in Year 7 are commonly using joined-up handwriting but this becomes less evident as pupils progress through the school. A scrutiny of a class set of books in Year 9, for example, revealed that few pupils were joining their handwriting up and that some of it was difficult to read. Teachers are not tackling this effectively enough and some pupils are in danger of leaving school with very poor handwriting. This is not preparing these pupils effectively for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
- The teaching of reading is improving. Those pupils who enter the college in Year 7 with reading skills that are below the national average are receiving good support. Additional funding for Year 7 Literacy Catch Up is well spent. As a result, many of them are now making good progress. Teachers and teaching assistants are learning to use phonics (letters and the sounds that they make) to support the teaching of reading in order that they are consistent with the approaches of primary schools.
- The teaching of mathematics is also improving, and more-able pupils say that they are increasingly experiencing challenge in many lessons. The subject is popular with many pupils who speak positively of the way that teachers explain new concepts in a way that helps them to understand.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils enter the college in Year 7 with levels of attainment that are below the national average in both English and mathematics. When they leave the college at the end of Year 11 pupils' achievement in English and mathematics is broadly in line with the national average.

- The proportions of pupils achieving 5 A* - C in GCSEs including English and mathematics is in line with the national level. Current college predictions, which have been accurate in previous years, indicate that the proportion of pupils achieving 5 A*- C at GCSE, including English and mathematics, is set to rise this year.
- Pupils who are disadvantaged make similar rates of progress to other pupils. However, attainment gaps between this group of pupils and others do not narrow during their time at the college. This means that disadvantaged pupils leave the college with, on average, a grade lower than other pupils in GCSE mathematics, and half a grade less in English.
- Current school assessment data indicate that the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and others are not set to improve for Year 11 in 2015.
- Boys have underachieved in recent years when compared to girls. This is also set to continue this year in English, although the gap has almost closed in mathematics.
- The achievement of the most able pupils requires improvement. Below average proportions of these pupils achieved the higher grades of A* and A in the past. The picture is improving, especially in mathematics, where many more pupils are on track to gain these grades in Year 10.
- The achievement of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is variable. In 2014 the achievement of pupils in this group was below the national figure because a number of them made less than expected progress. Within this group were several pupils who had recently joined the college, limiting the number of courses that they could take and complete. This impacted upon their achievement considerably. Current data indicate that this group of pupils is making expected levels of progress.
- A small number of pupils attend a local college for one day per week to study construction and engineering. Staff from Cromwell Community College check their progress regularly. These pupils are achieving well and are on track to gain their qualifications.
- The college does not currently enter pupils for GCSEs at an early stage.

The sixth form provision

requires improvement

- Achievement in the sixth form is improving. In 2014 students' AS level outcomes were much better than in the previous year. Improvements in sixth form teaching did not impact on the A2 examination results and these were below average in 2014.
- With the notable exception of Information Technology, achievement in some vocational courses is too low. Leaders in the sixth form have been reluctant to set aspirational targets and this has contributed to underachievement.
- Leadership of the sixth form has not been effective the past. Support has been in place recently and this has led to key improvements. Leadership of this part of the college is in transition and a new leader will be in place after Easter 2015.
- Teaching in the sixth form is variable. Some is outstanding and leads to very positive student enthusiasm and commitment to a subject. In A level psychology, for example, students were learning in a style designed to prepare them well for university or further education. They are thriving in this environment and are confident and eager to express their views. Critically, these students are all on track to achieve their aspirational targets.
- This level of teaching is not consistent across the sixth form, and some students have little understanding of what they need to do to improve their grades. In addition to this, while some teachers regularly check that students keep their folders up to date and that they are well-organised, others are less rigorous and students in some classes did not have their folders and said that they were rarely checked.

- Students in the sixth form present very good role models for younger pupils. Their behaviour is frequently exemplary and they are generally positive about their subjects. Students play an active role in the life of the college through, for example, organising charity events or sports leadership.

- Students are positive about the guidance and advice that they are receiving. They feel very supported in their applications to university and many are delighted to have received offers.

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	138177
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	455212

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11–18
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1090
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	129
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Smy
Principal	Jane Horn
Date of previous school inspection	Not inspected as an academy
Telephone number	01354 692193
Fax number	01354 695952
Email address	office@cromwell.cambs.sch.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2015

