

The Cottlesloe School

Aylesbury Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 0NY

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

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

- The quality of teaching is not consistently good enough in some subjects.
- When teachers plan, they do not always make sure work will be hard enough.
- Teachers often do not set tasks which encourage students to work without adult support.
- The achievement of boys in English and mathematics, though improving, is not as good as it should be.
- The school's judgements about the quality of teaching and achievement are sometimes over-generous because leaders at all levels do not check and assess performance in enough detail.
- The sixth form requires improvement. There is too much variation in students' achievement across the sixth form subjects and between AS and A level.
- The governing body does not challenge the school effectively about students' performance and weak teaching.

The school has the following strengths

- Behaviour and attitudes to learning have improved since the previous inspection. Students are safe and free from bullying.
- A literacy programme is being implemented in all subjects, leading to marked improvements in students' writing and reading skills.
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good in both the sixth form and the main school.
- Safeguarding arrangements are excellent.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 44 lessons, of which seven were jointly observed with a member of the school’s leadership team.
- Meetings were held with groups of students, the Chair of the Governing Body, two other governors and school staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 119 responses to Ofsted’s on-line Parent View survey and 68 responses from school staff.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents. These included the school’s own data on students’ current progress, its evaluation of how well it does, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, documents relating to safeguarding, and students’ work.

Inspection team

Peter Limm, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Charlotte Evers	Additional Inspector
Jamie Clarke	Additional Inspector
Sheila Crew	Additional Inspector
Helena McVeigh	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cottesloe is larger than the average-sized secondary school and has specialist Arts College status.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is a little below average.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage and only a small number are from minority ethnic backgrounds or speak English as an additional language.
- The proportions of students at school action, supported by school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs, are all below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching across the school, including the sixth form, by ensuring all teachers:
 - raise the expectations of what students can achieve
 - plan lesson tasks which set work at the right level of challenge for all students and which fire their imaginations and curiosity
 - help students to work more on their own, using a wide range of resources so that they rely less on teachers for answers and direction
 - check more regularly during lessons to see how far students have fully understood and mastered the skills, concepts and techniques being used and developed.
- Speed up the progress made by boys in English and mathematics.
- Improve the impact of the school's leaders by:
 - strengthening the effectiveness of leaders to reduce students' underachievement and improve rapidly the quality of teaching by making sure that leaders make checks using more precise and accurate data
 - developing the skills of the governing body so it can understand how well students are achieving through using the school's achievement data
 - undertaking an external review of the governing body.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' progress is too variable between subjects throughout the school. Progress in English has improved, but it requires improvement in mathematics and science.
- Students with special educational needs in Years 7 and 8 make slower progress than other groups. Boys do not make sufficient progress in English and mathematics.
- Students eligible for the pupil premium and those with special educational needs from Years 9 to 11 make expected, and sometimes better than expected, progress.
- Attainment is broadly average and has been rising over the past three years. Close to three-quarters of students attained five or more A*-C grades in 2012. There was a similar, though much slower, pattern of increase in the proportion of students achieving five or more A*-C grades including English and mathematics between 2009 and 2011. The results in 2012, including re-mark results, indicate that this proportion remains the same.
- Teaching is not consistently good enough to speed up students' progress.
- Teaching of literacy skills are regularly written into teachers' planning in a wide range of subjects and this has enabled students to improve their writing, reading and speaking skills. Students' spelling and punctuation skills are improving because of extra work done by the school.
- There is too much variation in achievement of students in the sixth form which means that the sixth form requires improvement. Students perform less well at AS than at A level, though attainment here is broadly average
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the on-line survey felt that progress was good. However, the inspection evidence shows that students' progress requires improvement.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is not enough consistently good teaching to result in good achievement in all subjects and year groups. However, there is some good teaching in most subjects and there is also some outstanding teaching.
- Weaker teaching occurs when teachers talk for too long and offer too much guidance and so students are not given enough time to think for themselves or to work on their own. This also applies to teaching in the sixth form.
- Too often a topic is delivered to a whole class without taking account of the different starting points of individual students.
- Some teachers do not check students' understanding well enough during lessons.
- Weaker teaching also occurs because students are sometimes not given demanding work to speed up their progress. Some students commented that their work was 'too easy', especially when they finish tasks early and do not move on to more difficult work.
- The provision for those needing additional support, including those who have behaviour issues, is improving, especially in Years 9 to 11, because support is better suited to their needs. This is less the case for such students in Year 7 and 8.
- Aspects of students' spiritual, moral and cultural development are promoted regularly. In an assembly, students were encouraged to think deeply about cultural diversity and to ask questions about how they felt about different groups of people. In a philosophy lesson, students were challenged to make up their own questions about how best to live.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are good

- Students, parents and staff all agree that behaviour has improved markedly since the last inspection and that it is now good. Students say that in lessons and around the school, behaviour is typically good. This was clear during the inspection. Exclusions have reduced significantly over time though they remain slightly above average.

- Students are generally punctual to lessons. They are polite, respectful and courteous. Students demonstrate good behaviour in lessons and are willing to learn.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because in lessons where there is weaker teaching and work given to students is too easy, students lose focus and interest.
- Attendance is above average in the main school, though it is less good in the sixth form.
- Bullying is rare and incidents are quickly and effectively dealt with by the school. Effective steps have been taken by the school to enable students to understand how they can tackle prejudice and discrimination of any kind. Students spoke knowledgeably about issues such as homophobic bullying and cyber bullying.
- Students say they are proud of their school and growing numbers of students are opting to join the sixth form.
- Students in the sixth form play a big role in mentoring and supporting younger students.

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- The headteacher provides determined leadership and, since the last inspection, has implemented a number of initiatives to improve the school. He has restructured the senior team in order to keep the school's key focus on improving achievement and the quality of teaching. However, these approaches have not led to achievement being better than broadly average throughout the school, and the quality of teaching requires improvement.
 - The headteacher and senior staff discuss regularly with staff how well they are performing and making progress towards achieving their individual targets. During these meetings, the headteacher and senior staff use information from regular lesson observations and teacher appraisals. However, the data about student performance are not sufficiently precise or accurate for teachers and middle leaders to know exactly how well their students are doing. This is also the case in relation to the sixth form.
 - The school's own evaluation of its performance is too cumbersome for staff and members of the governing body to understand and use easily to drive improvements in the school.
 - The approaches in place for regularly checking the quality of teaching and learning are appropriate, but the school's view of the quality of teaching is often too generous. Several weaknesses in the quality of teaching, such as too much teacher-talk, have not been addressed effectively enough.
 - Good opportunities are given to all staff to develop their professional skills through training. Training is well planned and builds on the expertise of the school's staff. However, the school does not know if the training is improving the performance of individual teachers.
 - The support for disabled students and those with special educational needs has improved and is helping them make better progress in Years 9 to 11, though much less so in Years 7 and 8. There is a well-planned programme of support for those students eligible for the pupil premium and currently these students are beginning to make faster progress.
 - The curriculum is suitably broad and balanced and there are better opportunities than at the time of the last inspection for students to go from Key Stage 4 into the sixth form.
 - The school's good programme for developing student's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural awareness and understanding has been well planned and coordinated.
 - Safeguarding arrangements are good.
 - The school has not used the local authority to support its drive for improvement but has benefited from a longstanding relationship with a local headteacher who acted, until recently, as the school's improvement partner.
 - The school's website is helpful to parents in keeping them informed about their children's learning and wider school issues. There is also a good learning site for students which provides work and enables students to access resources and upload their work for marking.
 - The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the on-line questionnaire said they were pleased with the way the school was led and that they would recommend it to others.
- **The governance of the school:**

- the governing body has ensured that the school meets statutory requirements relating to safeguarding and equalities, and has challenged the school well over finances and how far staff increases in pay can be justified. However, the governing body requires improvement because it has not analysed student achievement data well enough to improve the quality of teaching in the school.
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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	110533
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	401130

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Foundation
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	1145
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	185
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Collis
Headteacher	Nigel Fox
Date of previous school inspection	16–17 September 2009
Telephone number	01296 688264
Fax number	01296 681729
Email address	office@cottesloe.bucks.sch.uk

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