

The Cottesloe School

Aylesbury Road, Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, LU7 0NY

Inspection dates 24–25 April 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Achievement at the end of Year 11 is not yet high enough despite some impressive improvements at the school. In particular, students do not reach the standards they are capable of in mathematics.
- Students' achievement is variable between subjects. Despite some improvements, students known to be eligible for the pupil premium make less progress than their peers.
- Teaching requires improvement because it is not consistently good throughout the school. Not all teachers set high enough expectations of what students can and should achieve.
- Students are not always required to correct their work to show that they really know and understand what they have learned.
- The sixth form requires improvement because students' progress is not good in all subjects.
- Improvement in some subjects, such as mathematics, is still lagging behind stronger achievement in other subjects. Until recently some subject leaders have not been quick enough to tackle weakness in teaching.
- Some teachers do not use the assessment information about their students to ensure that learning is challenging, especially for the most able students.

The school has the following strengths:

- Students achieve much success in English, the arts, geography and history. Standards are rapidly improving in German, French and science.
- Attendance is above the national average.
- Students feel safe in school. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school.
- Determined, thoughtful and incisive leadership from the headteacher and senior staff has resulted in a strong improvement since 2012. Senior leaders are challenging all staff to improve their teaching. There is no room for complacency. Governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are effective and challenge all leaders to do better.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 39 lessons, of which almost one third were joint observations with senior leaders. In addition, inspectors made a number of shorter visits to lessons and tutorial sessions.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other school leaders and managers and groups of staff.
- Members of the inspection team held meetings with four groups of students, representing all age groups in the school. Discussions also took place with students informally.
- A meeting was held with members of the governing body including the Chair of Governors, and a discussion took place with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspection team observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including the school's own evaluation of how well it is doing, the school improvement plan and statistical information about students' achievement, attendance and exclusions.
- There were 48 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and 74 responses to the staff questionnaire. Additional comments were received from parents, and consideration was given to the views expressed by families in response to the school's own surveys.

Inspection team

Rob Ridout, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Maureen Hill	Additional Inspector
Kanwaljit Singh	Additional Inspector
Gordon Jackson	Additional Inspector
Peter Thomas	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cottesloe School is a larger-than-average non-selective secondary school in a local authority which operates within a selective system.
- The school has a sixth form and specialist status for the arts.
- Nearly all students are of White British, Irish, Other White or Mixed White heritage; very few students are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of students whose first language is not English is well below average.
- The proportion of students eligible for the pupil premium is well below the national average. The pupil premium is additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average. The proportion of students supported by school action is below average. The proportion identified at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- A small number of students are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up funding, which is for students who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in reading or mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Two students attend programmes at Wycombe Grange and the Blueprint Centre.
- The school enters students early for GCSE examinations in English.
- The school meets current government 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 by ensuring that all teachers:
 - raise further their expectations of what students can achieve and set harder work for the most able students
 - plan their teaching so that students eligible for the pupil premium can achieve as well as their peers at the school
- Speed up the progress and raise the attainment of students, particularly in mathematics by the end of Key Stage 4 by making sure that all teachers:
 - use information about students' levels of attainment more effectively in the classroom to build on previous learning
 - require students to respond to their marking and feedback to show their understanding and help them to improve their work
 - use homework effectively to develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills in all subjects
- Increase further the impact of faculty and subject leaders by:
 - carrying out more shared observations of teaching with senior leaders, and scrutinising students' books more frequently in order to hold teachers more fully to account
 - showing all teachers how to use progress information to plan lessons at the right level for all groups of students, including those supported by the pupil premium and the most able.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Students join the school with standards broadly in line with those found nationally. As a result of inconsistencies in their progress, particularly in mathematics, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSEs at grades A* to C including English and mathematics in 2013 remained in line with the national average.
- Year 11 students supported by the pupil premium are not doing as well as they should and are not making the same progress in English and mathematics as other students in the school. In other year groups in both English and mathematics, the progress of students eligible for the pupil premium funding is much improved and the gap between their attainment and that of all other students has narrowed to just under half and about two thirds of a grade respectively in 2013.
- In lessons, the most able students are not always provided with work that stretches them. Homework does not always engage or encourage all students to extend their learning as fully as it might. As a result, not all of the most able students make good progress to achieve the top grades of A* and A that they are capable of attaining. This is especially so in mathematics and science.
- As a result of robust leadership and typically high-quality teaching, students' achievement in English is consistently good. In mathematics, students are making better progress because teaching is improving, there is stronger leadership of mathematics and several high-quality practitioners are turning around the previously weak department
- Students are entered for English examinations in November of Year 11 and the majority make significantly better than expected progress and achieve exceptionally well. Early entry is not used in any other subject.
- Students benefit from good opportunities to practise and improve their literacy skills in a range of subjects.
- Students' achievement in the arts and humanities is now at least good. Results in German, French and science are improving rapidly.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are monitored effectively by leaders and receive good support. This helps them to engage with their learning and make rapid progress.
- The very small number of students who attend courses outside of the school are very carefully monitored and they are making good progress.
- Programmes to support reading and writing through the use of Year 7 catch-up funding are having a positive impact. Students are benefiting from this support and are achieving as well as their peers. Work with primary school partners enables early identification of students' needs. The summer school ensures students consolidate their reading and writing skills and these are developed further through group work and the one-to-one support provided by sixth form students.
- Almost 80% of Year 11 students go into the sixth form. Achievement is improving at both AS and A level and most students achieve results that are broadly similar to those of other students nationally. The sixth form requires improvement because of inconsistencies between subjects. Leaders are tackling this with vigour; teaching is improving and leaders are more incisive in checking students' progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching is not consistently good in all subjects throughout Key Stage 3 to 5. Some students make good progress but others do not because they experience variability in teaching.
- Nonetheless, there is a growing core of much more effective practice which is resulting in

students making better progress.

- Where teaching requires improvement teachers do not use information from previous learning well enough to plan work at levels suited to the differing abilities of students. Consequently, there is a lack of challenge, particularly for the most able, and students do not make enough progress. Not all teachers have high enough expectations of what students can achieve.
- The quality of teachers' feedback to students varies but is improving. For example, a teacher provided Year 10 law students with excellent written feedback about their work, made it clear what to do to improve and encouraged them to respond and 'fix it'. This however is not typical; not all teachers check students' responses to see how well they understand their work.
- Students learn well when teachers have high expectations, plan challenging tasks tailored to the different abilities of their students and use learning time very effectively. In such lessons, teachers often check students' understanding through skilful questioning. For example, in a Year 11 English lesson, the teacher reshaped questions very effectively to deepen students' understanding of the poem, 'The Tyger'.
- Leaders are helping all teachers develop good opportunities for students to improve their literacy skills. Students communicate well in discussion, reading and writing in many subjects.
- Relationships are typically very positive between staff and students. Teaching assistants offer effective, well-targeted support to students in lessons.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of students is good. Students and staff share a strong sense of belonging to a caring and respectful community. Students recognise and value the fact that the school is working hard to improve things for them. They feel listened to and know that the headteacher will act to help them succeed.
- Students get on well with each other. They have good manners and behave well in lessons and around the school. There is no litter around the site. Students are courteous and welcoming to each other, staff and visitors.
- Attitudes to learning are good and students are well supported. This is particularly true of the students who attend the LINC. Their individualised programmes help them to improve their skills and develop confidence in relating to one another and better integrate with others.
- Students describe this as a happy school because of the good, positive relationships that exist between themselves and between students and staff. Parents confirm behaviour is good.
- Attendance is improving because of the targeted work by leaders and pastoral teams.
- Students move around the site well and are punctual to lessons.
- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Parent View shows that all respondents believe that their children are happy and safe.
- Students say they feel safe in school. They have a good understanding of different forms of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying. They say that bullying does not occur very often but, when it does happen, it is dealt with very effectively.
- Students are very proud of their school and this is reflected in their smart appearance in their uniform. The majority of Year 11 students stay on into the sixth form. It is common to see sixth form students working with and supporting individuals and groups in the main school.

The leadership and management are good

- The ambitious vision of the headteacher, senior leaders and governors has secured significant and numerous improvements to leadership. Leaders and managers at all levels within the school have a more accurate view of how effective the school is. Action plans describe clearly what needs to be done and by when, to embed and sustain the hard-won improvement over the last two years.
- Leaders accurately judge that there remains variability in teaching. This is because some subject

leaders are not securing consistently high quality planning, teaching and marking in the teams they manage. This is especially true in mathematics where standards are not good, but there are strong signs that this is improving under the direction of the recently appointed subject leader.

- New leaders are injecting a real sense of purpose and energy into the school and show a determination and good understanding of how to secure better outcomes for students.
- Senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and the impact on achievement more rigorously than before. There are stronger links between the targets set for students' progress and the pay and progression of staff through performance management. These higher expectations are understood by all teachers and teaching assistants. The proportion of teaching that is typically good or better is improving, demonstrating the school's capacity for further improvement.
- Students say that the school has a zero tolerance of discrimination of any kind. However, equality of opportunity requires improvement because not all students achieve as well as they should in mathematics and the gap in achievement between students for whom the school receives the pupil premium and other students is not closing rapidly enough.
- The curriculum provides a good balance of vocational and academic subjects. Key Stage 4 students enjoy the choices available and are increasingly successful.
- Provision and support for students whose situations may make them vulnerable and for disabled students or those with special educational needs are well managed. The work of teaching assistants helps these students to integrate effectively in lessons and learn as well as their peers.
- The school effectively promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Many participate in the wide range of creative and sporting opportunities on offer. The rich diversity of extra-curricular activities contributes significantly to students' enjoyment of school life.
- Since the appointment of the new headteacher, the school is working more effectively and securing improvement rapidly. The school is exploring greater links with its local partners, including the Wing Liaison Group, to share best practice in teaching.
- Parents rightly have much confidence in how the school is led and its ability to prepare their children to cope with the next steps in their education and prepare for work. Many students progress into the sixth form to follow worthwhile qualifications.
- The local authority provides appropriate and targeted support to check the accuracy of assessment data and how leaders use this to judge rates of progress. Safeguarding requirements are met very well and policies and procedures are exemplary. The school works successfully with outside agencies to tackle any concerns raised.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Following the review of governance and since the appointment of the new headteacher, the governing body is more incisive and demanding in challenging leaders to account for improvement. The headteacher and senior leaders provide good quality information to governors. As a result governors have a much improved understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, including the quality of teaching. The governing body has a good understanding of the school's finances and has reversed a deficit budget, but it has yet to secure good progress of all students supported through the pupil premium funding. Governors understand the performance management of staff and are clear about their role in making decisions about salary progression. Through better training governors are using data more effectively to check on how well the school is doing in comparison with other schools nationally. New leaders, with the support of the governing body, are taking action to tackle underperformance and raise standards.

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	442476

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

Type of school	Modern (non-selective)
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,177
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	170
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roy Collis
Headteacher	Andy McBurnie
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 October 2012
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