

Birley Community College

Birley Lane, Sheffield, S12 3BP

Inspection dates 3–4 June 2015

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- In 2014, the proportion of students who attained five good GCSEs, including in English and Mathematics, was below average.
- Students do not make rapid enough progress in most subjects, especially in mathematics, to reach their full potential. The most able students are not sufficiently challenged to enable them to reach the highest levels of attainment.
- Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others were wide in 2014.
- Teaching is not yet good. Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students can achieve, and do not always set work which meets the needs of the full range of abilities.
- Feedback to students about how well they are learning is not yet consistently precise enough to help them to understand what they need to do to improve their work.
- Students do not always have the skills to manage their own behaviour outside lessons. Sometimes they lack consideration for others.
- Students do not always have positive attitudes to learning. When teaching is not good, they get bored and lose focus.
- Although the number of exclusions has reduced since the previous inspection, the proportion of students who are excluded is still above average.
- Despite improvements since the previous inspection, attendance remains below average. Too many students, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are persistently absent. As a result, the school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Since the previous inspection, leaders and governors have not brought about rapid enough improvement across the school. The pace of improvement is steady but not good enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Newly appointed leaders in English, mathematics and science have a good understanding of how well their subjects are performing and what they need to do to bring about improvements.
- Students achieve well from their starting points in English. They have plenty of opportunities to read and to learn to express their ideas clearly.
- The governing body, under the guidance of the new Chair, now has a good understanding of how well the school is performing.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in parts of 39 lessons taught by 39 different teachers. Six of these lessons were observed jointly with a member of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors observed students' behaviour around the school as well as in lessons. They talked with students informally about their learning, as well as holding more formal meetings with groups of students of all abilities and from both key stages.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, members of the teaching staff and with the governing body. In addition, inspectors held a meeting with a representative from the local authority.
- The views of the 73 parents who responded to the online parental questionnaire (Parent View) were taken into account, as well as information collected by the school about the views of parents. In addition, inspectors scrutinised the 66 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspection team examined a range of documentation, including data about students' achievement from internal tracking systems and analysis provided by school leaders. Inspectors also scrutinised leaders' monitoring records, including minutes of governing body meetings and information provided relating to attendance, safeguarding and behaviour. In addition, they took into account monitoring reports from the local authority.

Inspection team

Christine Birchall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gerard Fitzpatrick	Additional Inspector
Sally Lane	Additional Inspector
Anne McAvan	Additional Inspector
Robert Jones	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Birley Community College is a larger than average-sized secondary school. The vast majority of students are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of disadvantaged students supported by pupil premium funding is slightly below average. The pupil premium is additional funding provided for students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of students who are disabled or who have special educational needs is above average. The school has specialist resourced provision for students with autism. Twenty-four students are on roll with bespoke support which enables them to access approximately 80% of their timetable in mainstream lessons.
- A very small number of students make use of alternative provision. The main providers include Education in Angling, Recycle, Heeley City Farm and Whirlow farm.
- Birley Community College is part of a federation with Birley Community Primary School. The two schools share the same leadership, governance and campus.
- The school does not enter students early for GCSE examinations
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and so accelerate achievement for all groups of students, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that:
 - teachers always have high expectations of what students can achieve, particularly the most able
 - marking and feedback always provide students with precise next steps about what they need to do to improve their work
 - students have more opportunities to develop their mathematical reasoning skills by applying their knowledge to solving real-life problems
 - all teachers promote accurate spelling
 - the best practice in teaching is shared across the school.
- Improve students' behaviour and attendance so that they are able to make better progress by:
 - taking steps to ensure that students have the skills to manage their own behaviour so that they are considerate and supportive of each other outside lessons
 - ensuring that teachers consistently apply behaviour management strategies so that students have a clear understanding of what is expected of them in lessons
 - improving attendance by more rigorous analysis of the attendance of different groups of students.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and so accelerate the pace of change, by:
 - regularly checking the implementation of new strategies to ensure that they are having the required impact and are consistently applied
 - ensuring that behaviour leaders have the skills and knowledge to drive improvements in behaviour across the school
 - closely monitoring the impact of catch-up funding to ensure that all students make good progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management **require improvement**

- Senior leaders have a realistic understanding of how well the school is performing and what needs to be done to bring about improvements. However, until recently the pace of change has been slow and, as a result, students' achievement, especially in mathematics, has only just begun to accelerate. Leaders are yet to ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good and that students have good attitudes to learning and behave well.
- Over the last year, systems for checking how well students are learning have become increasingly robust and, as a result, school data shows that more students are making the progress they should. Leaders are now using data more effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress of students in their classes.
- Leaders have set teachers more rigorous targets this year to challenge them to improve aspects of their performance. They use these to ensure that teachers all have access to a varied range of training opportunities. Staff value these and say that they are making a difference to their skills and confidence. As a result, the proportion of teaching which is good or better has increased over the course of the year. However, opportunities to share the best teaching practices widely among staff are still sometimes overlooked.
- Newly appointed leaders for English, mathematics and science have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in their subjects. They are using this information to make adjustments to the curriculum and to teaching to ensure that achievement in their areas improves. They have ensured increasing levels of consistency in the way teachers teach and so marking and feedback to students, for example, have improved over the course of the year. However, leaders are yet to ensure that the quality of marking is consistently good so that all students are clear about what they need to do to improve their work.
- Senior leaders have developed the curriculum to ensure that it is broad and provides an appropriate balance between academic and vocational opportunities. The personal, social and health education curriculum in particular is well developed. It ensures that students are given a range of opportunities to develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding and to promote their awareness of British values including of living in a democratic and multi-cultural society and the importance of tolerance and respect.
- The curriculum, along with effective careers guidance, ensures that when students leave school at the end of Year 11 there are very few who are not in employment, education or training. The curriculum is enhanced by a range of extra-curricular activities, for example in sports.
- The school's work to promote equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination requires improvement because, although gaps are closing, there is still inconsistency in the achievement of different groups of students. Although attendance has improved and exclusions have reduced overall, too many disadvantaged students are excluded or frequently absent, and this slows their progress.
- Strategies to develop students' literacy skills are well developed across the school. Students are provided with ample opportunities to read and are supported to develop their writing skills across the curriculum through, for example, a focus on key words. However, some teachers do not place strong enough emphasis on the importance of accurate spelling. Opportunities for students to develop their numeracy skills across the curriculum are not yet as well developed as literacy.
- Leaders have undertaken a review of the effectiveness of their spending of pupil premium funding. There has been a sharper focus on monitoring the impact of spending which has enabled individual students to be better targeted. The school's current tracking data indicates that gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others are starting to close. However, leaders are yet to ensure that the impact of the Year 7 catch-up funding (additional funding to support students whose attainment on entry to school in Year 7 in English and mathematics is below average) is closely monitored to check that it is effective in improving students' achievement. Although students are catching up in English, in mathematics, students struggle to improve.
- The local authority has a very accurate view of how well the school is performing and has provided regular challenge to senior leaders to hold them to account for improvements. They have brokered a range of partnerships with other schools to promote developments in teaching, leadership and assessment. As a result, the school's performance is improving. However, this support has not yet resulted in students' good achievement over time.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding students meet statutory requirements and are effective in doing so. Nevertheless, not all students manage their own behaviour well. Some smoke on the school premises.

■ The governance of the school:

- Over time, governors have not held the school effectively to account for making sure that the quality of teaching is good and that students achieve well, behave well and show good attitudes to learning.
- Governors have undertaken a review to check the effectiveness of their work and identify how it can be improved. They have received additional training and now have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The new Chair of the Governing body leads the governing body strongly.
- Governors are taking effective steps to find out first-hand how well the school is doing, for example by having link governors for particular aspects of the school's work. They now have a more accurate understanding of how effectively teachers are performing. They now ensure that there are clear links between teachers' performance and pay progression and that any weak teaching is tackled. However, they are yet to hold leaders fully to account for making sure that teaching is consistently good.
- Governors expect regular reports on the school's progress from middle and senior leaders as well as getting external perspectives from a school improvement consultant. This is giving them a better understanding of data that shows how well the school is performing in comparison to others. They are using all this information increasingly well to ask senior leaders challenging questions.
- Governors know how pupil premium funding is spent and monitor the impact by requesting regular updates about how well disadvantaged students are achieving.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

require improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement.
- Students' attitudes to their work and learning are not consistently good. In lessons, the majority of students are keen to do well and settle to their work quickly. However, when teaching lacks challenge, or when teachers do not follow the school's behaviour management systems effectively, there is some low-level disruption. Some students get bored and lose concentration. For example, talking quietly instead of listening to the teacher or sending texts on their mobile phones.
- Outside lessons, a minority of students lack consideration for others and will, for example, when corridors are narrow and spaces get crowded, push other students. Some students run along the corridors and are unnecessarily noisy at breaks and lunchtimes. Behaviour on the sports field is sometimes boisterous and older students sometimes lack consideration for the needs of the younger ones.
- Most students are happy, confident and say that they enjoy school. They are courteous and respectful to adults.
- Students generally take pride in their work and their school. Most are dressed smartly and arrive to lessons with the necessary equipment to allow learning to proceed smoothly. They care for the school environment and usually clear up after themselves at breaks and lunchtimes.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure requires improvement.
- Sometimes at break and lunchtime when there is less adult supervision, some students struggle to manage their own behaviour and are boisterous. There are a number of students who persist in smoking on the school premises.
- Leaders ensure that all appropriate safeguarding systems are in place. For example, all staff have up-to-date training and a good understanding of child protection requirements. Processes for recruiting new teachers and checking entry to the school site are robust.
- Students say that they feel safe around school, that there is very little bullying, and that any bullying which occurs is dealt with effectively. They have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and are aware for example of the risks of cyber-bullying. The school's records indicate that behaviour issues are reducing.
- Although attendance has improved, it remains stubbornly below average. The proportion of disadvantaged students who are frequently absent is high. The number of fixed-term exclusions has also reduced but the is still above average, particularly for disadvantaged students
- Leaders take effective steps to ensure that the few students who attend off-site alternative provision are safe, that they attend regularly and behave well.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Although leaders' records and inspection evidence shows that the quality of teaching is improving, The impact of teaching is still not consistently good enough to accelerate achievement across most subjects and year groups.
- Teachers do not have consistently high expectations of what students can achieve, particularly the most able. Most teachers still set the same work for all students in the class regardless of ability or starting point. This means that some students are not sufficiently challenged.
- The quality of feedback and marking is improving as a result of more recent training and an emphasis on ensuring that students have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. At its best, there is clear evidence that students are making faster progress as a result of the good guidance they receive. However, there is still some inconsistency. Not all marking is focused enough to provide all students with precise next steps about what they need to do to improve their work.
- There is some good use of assessment in lessons where both teacher and students are able to easily check how well students are doing. Teachers are then able to respond to this to provide additional support for those who need it. However, not all teachers use assessment well or accurately enough to set students precise targets for improvement.
- Relationships between teachers and students are generally good which creates a good working atmosphere and means that most students want to do well. Most teachers plan interesting activities and use engaging resources which encourage students to want to learn. However, some teachers struggle to get students' attention, and do not use the behaviour management systems well enough to refocus students on their work.
- Teachers' questions are often very effective in developing and deepening students' understanding, and encouraging them to give detailed responses. On occasion however, questioning is not targeted well enough and this means that some students are not challenged to participate in the lesson.
- Teaching assistants and other additional adults are well used in lessons, show initiative, and make an effective contribution to the learning of the students they support, particularly for those students with autism.
- The teaching of reading and writing is generally good. Students are given plenty of opportunities to read and write and to learn to express their ideas clearly. As a result, over time, students achieve well in English. However, students achievement in mathematics requires improvement because opportunities to develop students' mathematical reasoning skills by applying their knowledge to solving real-life problems are missed.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- Typically, students start school in Year 7 with levels of attainment which are broadly average. In 2014, by the end of Year 11, although students made expected progress from their starting points, too few made good progress across the school. The proportion that attained five good GCSEs, including in English and mathematics, was below average. Most students achieved well in English but progress in mathematics was too slow. Too few students reached the higher levels of attainment.
- This year, leaders have increased the rigour of systems for checking how well students are learning. As a result, teachers have been able to target their support more effectively as soon as individual students begin to show any signs of falling behind. The school's data indicates that the progress of current Year 11 students has accelerated and their standards of attainment are higher than in 2014. Inspection evidence from reviewing work in students' books and observing students' achievement in lessons also confirms this. However, the progress of students in other year groups is still variable and requires improvement.
- The achievement of disadvantaged students, although improving, is not yet consistently good In Year 11 in 2014 in mathematics, disadvantaged students attained over a grade lower than other students in school and almost two grades lower than other students nationally. In English, disadvantaged students attained two-thirds of a grade lower than other students both in school and nationally. The school's data for current Year 11 indicates that gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged students and others are closing, with disadvantaged students expected to attain approximately half a grade lower than others students in the school and nationally in English and in mathematics. Progress is now accelerating for

disadvantaged students, with more in Year 11 on track to make good progress. However, there is still some variation in the achievement of disadvantaged students in other year groups.

- Progress in English is good because students are given opportunities to write for a range of purposes, to read and to reflect. They sometimes struggle to explain their view clearly, but teachers have developed a number of strategies to support them with this. Progress in mathematics however is slower. Opportunities for students to develop their mathematical reasoning skills by applying their knowledge to solve real-life problems are beginning to become more frequent. This is placing less emphasis on repetitive exercises which do not deepen student's understanding.
- The achievement of the most able students requires improvement. Teachers do not routinely provide them with sufficient challenge to enable them to reach the highest levels of attainment.
- The progress of disabled students and those who have special educational needs, including those in the specialist resourced provision, requires improvement. Although students do well in English, progress remains slower in mathematics. Teachers are less skilled in providing resources which meet the needs of students, particularly those with autism.
- The few students who attend alternative provision achieve well because the curriculum and teaching are closely targeted to their needs.

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	462197

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	1,139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin StClair
Headteacher	Steve Robinson
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2013
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