

Futures Community College

Southchurch Boulevard, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 4UY

Inspection dates 22–23 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses.

- Students' progress is inadequate and, although there are signs of improvement, these are only evident in mathematics.
- Students do not have the basic skills, especially in speaking and writing, to prepare them well enough for their future lives. Handwriting is not good enough.
- Teaching is inadequate because it is not leading to good enough progress. Teachers sometimes set work that is too easy for the most-able students and too hard for the least-able students.
- The sixth form requires improvement. The courses sixth form students can choose from only cover a limited range of academic subjects. This is also true for able students in Years 10 and 11.
- Classroom assistants are not always fully clear about how they can best support students with their learning.
- Teachers do not mark work regularly enough. This means students are often not sure about how well they are doing, how to improve their work or how to make better progress.
- Teachers often talk too much rather than encouraging students to discuss what they are learning or to work by themselves. This sometimes results in students losing interest and not behaving as well as they should.
- Most subject leaders do not have the skills to check how effective teaching in their subjects is and to make improvements rapidly when they need to.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and senior leaders know where the school has weaknesses, and are taking swift action to improve teaching and students' progress.
- Students' attendance has improved from well below average to average in the last three years.
- Sixth form students do well in practical and work-related subjects.
- Most students behave well, and treat each with respect and consideration.
- Students feel safe, and know how to behave and how to keep themselves safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 35 teachers in 36 lessons or parts of lessons.
- Meetings were held with staff and students, and inspectors spoke to members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at documentation about the school’s work, including information about the achievement of students, development planning and the school’s self-evaluation.
- They took into account 8 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and also examined the school’s own analysis of parents’ views.

Inspection team

Edward Wheatley, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Gay Tattersall	Additional Inspector
Stephen Hume	Additional Inspector
Michael Stanton	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than most secondary schools, but numbers are rising.
- Students come from mainly White British backgrounds. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is above average, and a small number are at the early stages of learning English.
- The proportions of students supported through school action, and through school action plus or through a statement of special educational needs are well above average.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional funding given to the school by the government) is above average. These students include those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standard, which sets the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher took up his post in October 2012, after a period of significant changes at a senior level.
- The school's sixth form uses accommodation in the 'Prospects' post-16 college, which is on the same site. Some sixth-form and Key Stage 4 students also follow work-related courses at Prospects, and a few sixth-form students take work-related courses at other local colleges.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching to make sure that:
 - work is demanding and well matched to the capabilities of all students
 - students have opportunities to work by themselves
 - teachers deal well with occasional minor disruptions by students
 - classroom assistants always know how they can best help students with their learning.
- Raise standards and improve how well students make progress, by:
 - providing opportunities in all subjects for students to develop their speaking, listening and writing skills through answering questions, discussing their work with each other and explaining their understanding in speech and writing
 - improving the standard of students' handwriting
 - making sure students know precisely how well they are doing, how they can improve their work and how they can make rapid progress
 - providing academic choices in all subjects, including in the sixth form.
- Improve how well subject leaders:
 - check the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects
 - provide training and support for their colleagues to help drive up the standards of students' work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Students start at the school in Year 7 with well-below average levels of attainment. The majority of them make inadequate progress and so do not reach high enough standards by the end of Year 11.
- However, progress has started to improve. This is most noticeable in mathematics, but it is at an earlier stage in other subjects. The percentage of students achieving five or more A*-C grades at GCSE has remained low over recent years, and any improvements have yet to be sustained over time. Students do best in practical subjects, and those following work-related courses at Prospects and other local colleges do well.
- Students have average reading skills, but their writing is inadequate. Most students do not write enough, or in sufficient detail, in any of the subjects they study. Students' handwriting is frequently untidy and careless.
- Students do not speak as well as they should to explain their understanding or to show they understand the terminology of the subjects they learn. They have too few opportunities to listen to each other and to talk about their knowledge. They often lack the confidence to explain themselves in class.
- Students' numeracy skills are broadly average, and are used in several subjects; this contributes helpfully to their better confidence in mathematics than in English.
- There are pockets of good progress in most subjects and in most years, usually where work is well targeted to students' abilities. For example, Year 7 students of all abilities made good progress in an English lesson about producing a travel brochure because lower-ability students had several examples of brochures to use as models, and the most-able students wrote freely and imaginatively. The same approach is not true for all classes so students do not consistently make the progress they should.
- In mathematics, students' progress is best where teachers provide good individual support, and where students have a good grasp of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. This encourages them to be enthusiastic, and they make a positive effort to succeed.
- The pattern of inadequate progress is the same for all groups of students. There is less of a gap in this school than there is nationally between Year 11 results gained by students for whom the school receives the pupil premium and other students, but this is because standards for students as a whole are comparatively low. Students for whom the school receives pupil premium funding do not usually make good enough progress, and their GCSE results have been below those of similar students nationally. Many students entitled to the pupil premium make slow progress because learning is not planned in suitably small steps and support is not always clearly focussed on helping them to make good progress. This is also the case for disabled students and those who have special educational needs.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching has been unsatisfactory over time. Although it is getting better, and teachers are keen to improve their teaching, their efforts are yet to make a marked impression on students'

progress. Better teaching is not being sustained at the necessary level to enable students to make up lost ground and reach higher standards.

- Typically, teachers do not make high enough demands on students to enable them to learn more rapidly. Teachers do not always use information about how well students have achieved in the past to plan lessons to help students make fast enough progress. However, this is improving because teachers now have the information they need and they are clear about how well their students should achieve. In the best lessons, teachers use information about students' prior learning well, and plan work that ensures students make the progress they should. Work is challenging for students in these lessons.
- In many lessons teachers talk too much and students have too few opportunities to work alone or to join in discussions about their work. In these lessons learning is slow, and students are not enthusiastic learners. Where learning is best, teachers question students and expect them to explain their understanding to each other and sometimes to the whole class. In a Year 11 science lesson on the structure of atoms, for example, students had to explain what they knew to the whole class. This encouraged them to think clearly and to use the right terminology accurately in their explanations. The learning of all students was good, and although they teased each other when they stumbled over their explanations, it was good humoured and they helped each other well.
- The work of classroom assistants is sometimes good. In the best lessons, they know exactly what they need to do to support students, and how much time to allow students to work by themselves to gain confidence in their own abilities. While their contribution is improving, it is inconsistent. Sometimes classroom assistants are not included sufficiently in planning the work for the students they support, including those students supported through pupil premium funding.
- The best marking is frequent and sets high standards for students to achieve, both in the depth of their work and in how neat and well presented it is. Students respond well to marking that tells them how to do better. However, too much marking does not set high enough standards or give students the information they need to improve their work.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Students' behaviour is often good but is sometimes weaker when students find learning uninteresting, or when they are not involved enough in discussing their work or working by themselves.
 - Most of the behaviour that requires improvement involves students talking to each other, losing interest in the subject and quietly ignoring what is supposed to be happening in the lesson. Some students expressed frustration at not learning enough. Murmuring and quiet private conversations sometimes disrupt learning, and a small number of teachers do not have the necessary skills to deal with minor classroom disruptions. However, students rarely behave in a dangerous way. They move around safely in practical lessons, and handle equipment carefully.
 - Most students enjoy school, and readily join in activities in lessons when they have the opportunity to do so. Their attendance is broadly average. It has improved significantly in recent years because the school is establishing effective links with homes and, with social services and local authority staff, doing good work to make parents aware of how important it is for students
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to attend school regularly. The school has used some of its pupil premium funding successfully to ensure students attend school regularly.

- Students have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying. They say that bullying is rare and that staff deal with it well. They feel that the school acts quickly to resolve any worries they have.
- Students view the newly established 'school student leadership council' positively. They see it as a useful way to voice their concerns, and to take on responsibilities.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The new headteacher is giving a clear direction for how the school should improve. With good support from other senior leaders, and based on accurate evaluation of the school's weaknesses, he has rapidly introduced strategies to help improve teaching urgently and to speed up the progress students make. However, leadership as a whole is not good because subject leadership is not as strong.
 - Some heads of department are not secure in their evaluation of teaching or how to go about guiding colleagues in how to improve their teaching. Senior leaders are acting swiftly to share good practice in the school and to give training to improve subject leadership.
 - The school is demonstrating its capacity to improve through the rise in attendance and by the elimination of underachievement in mathematics. It is making sure improvement continues and is spread across other subjects by laying secure foundations to underpin better teaching and subject leadership. For example, the headteacher has rapidly established the performance management of teachers and other managers and set them targets linked to students' progress, which they did not have before he arrived. The commitment to improve is strong and staff welcome the support they are receiving. Systems to check students' progress are established, and are being used well to decide where students need individual help.
 - Plans to improve the courses offered are advanced for both Key Stage 4 and sixth-form students. Currently, students wishing to follow AS and A level courses receive good guidance on where they can follow the most suitable courses, but have to leave and go to other schools. However, some students do not go on to post-16 studies, so the school is planning to provide its own academic courses to run alongside the good range of work-related courses.
 - Currently, the school has some students completing early-entry GCSE courses, but has stopped this practice for future year groups. In the meantime it is monitoring students to ensure early entry does not limit their potential to achieve high grades. Where the school organises trips or visits to support the subjects that students study, it uses pupil premium funding successfully to ensure all students have equal opportunities to benefit from the experiences provided.
 - The school takes good care of its students. It has established a programme of personal, social and health education that promotes students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. In particular, students from different backgrounds get on well together and there is very little discrimination of any kind.
 - The school has good links with the local authority, which are helping to train and coach teachers in improving their skills. It is making further links with other schools where there is excellent
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teaching and subject leadership to help improve teaching and leadership skills.

■ **The governance of the school**

- The governing body has a good grasp of how the school has underachieved and has appointed the new headteacher to ensure the school improves. It has made certain the headteacher has urgently set up the teacher performance management system to rigorously link students' progress to teachers' pay rises. It works closely with the headteacher to check how funds are spent and, for example, has recognised that pupil premium funding has not been used effectively to improve standards for the students for whom it is intended. The governing body is well informed about the quality of teaching and how well students perform compared with local schools and other schools nationally. It supports and challenges the school, has regular training and has recruited new governors to provide expertise that will help the school improve. It makes sure requirements for safeguarding students are fully met, including procedures to check staff before they are appointed.
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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	132762
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	402556

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

Type of school	Comprehensive
School category	Foundation School
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	844
Of which, number on roll in sixth form	139
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Brian Clark
Headteacher	Stephen Capper
Date of previous school inspection	28 – 29 April 2010
Telephone number	01702 415300
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