

Kingsthorpe College

Boughton Green Road, Kingsthorpe, Northampton, NN2 7HR

Inspection dates 13–14 May 2015

| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------|
| | This inspection: | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Good | 2 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Quality of teaching | | Good | 2 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Sixth form provision | | Good | 2 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The leadership of the Principal has been transformational. Improvement has taken place at a rapid pace.
- Senior and middle leaders are driving improvement with renewed energy, passion and expertise and systems are in place to make sure improvement is sustained.
- The curriculum for students has been carefully considered. Students study subjects that are personal to them and this has meant that they are keener to learn and achieve.
- Students are now achieving well from their starting points.
- Teaching is now good. Teachers are planning activities that are more exciting and interesting. Their expectations of students' progress have improved.
- The gaps in performance between those students entitled to support from pupil premium funding and the other students within the college and nationally are now closing quickly.
- Students are now achieving well within the sixth form, particularly in Year 12. Teaching in the sixth form is good and there is a culture of high aspirations.
- Students within the college behave well and are polite and courteous. They are proud of their college. They appreciate the changes that have taken place and the impact they have had on their learning. They say they feel safe in the college.
- The Collaborative Academies Trust and governing body provide effective challenge and support to college leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Transformational change has not yet taken place in all areas of the college. For example, some subject areas are still not performing as well as they could.
- Not enough students are making more than expected progress. In addition, the most-able students are not always challenged enough in lessons.
- Students are set curriculum targets but sometimes they do not know what steps they need to take to achieve them or what the targets mean.
- Students' absence, although improving, is above the national average.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 33 lessons were observed, 10 of these were joint observations with the Principal and members of the senior leadership team. A scrutiny of the work of students eligible for pupil premium funding also took place.
- Meetings were held with representatives of the Collaborative Academies Trust, members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders, teachers and support staff. Inspectors held several meetings with students from all key stages.
- Inspectors observed behaviour around the college during the change of lessons and at break and lunchtimes. Tutor periods were visited as was a variety of enrichment activities.
- Inspectors took account of 35 responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Parent View and 126 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Jayne Ashman, Lead inspector | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Patrick Amieli | Additional Inspector |
| Russell Ayling | Additional Inspector |
| Emma Ing | Her Majesty’s Inspector |
| Louise Lee | Additional Inspector |

Full report

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection there has been extensive change at leadership level. The new Principal joined the college in April 2014 and the senior leadership team has been re-structured.
- A new faculty system has been implemented. Additionally, there are now learning directors who are responsible for learning and progress in their areas.
- The staffing profile is now more stable and the college is fully staffed.
- The college is larger than the average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is just below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of girls is below average.
- The proportion of students from minority ethnic groups and those students who speak English as an additional language is above average.
- The proportion of disabled students and those with special educational needs is higher than the national average.
- A small number of students receive alternative provision from: Hospital Outreach; Northamptonshire Skills; Technical Centre; The C E Academy; On Track; Real Project and The Rushmore Academy.
- The college exceeds the national floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress by the end of Year 11.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the rapid pace of improvement that has taken place is sustained and that good practice is shared in order to drive consistency across all areas of the college.
- Continue to accelerate learning and the progress of students by:
 - making sure that all students are appropriately challenged in all lessons, particularly the most-able students
 - ensuring that all students know and understand their curriculum targets and the steps in learning required to achieve them.
- Improve students' attendance to above the national average and rapidly reduce the number of students who are persistently absent.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Since the new Principal has been in post, the leadership of the college has been transformed and a great deal of improvement has taken place in a short period of time.
- The Principal, governors and senior leadership team have an accurate view of the strengths of the college and the areas on which they need to focus. The strategic plans for improvement contain ambitious targets, clear actions and success criteria. They are working documents and the Principal is rigorously held to account by the Chair of the Governing Body and the Trust to ensure the plans are effectively carried out.
- The senior leadership team have clear roles and responsibilities and have really 'stepped up' to the challenge of ensuring the college provides a good education for the students, with a culture of high expectations where teaching is good and students behave well.
- Middle leadership is developing as a strength of the college and the directors of learning appreciate their increased autonomy to drive improvement. Although the leadership talent within the college is being developed, inconsistencies remain and some subjects are led better than others.
- The leadership of teaching within the college is good. There is a robust quality assurance system in place and leaders at all levels adhere to this. Students' work is frequently scrutinised and lessons are observed regularly. Directors of learning said that this process had been influential in driving improvement at subject level and that they now have a consistent process to hold teachers to account; as a result, the quality of teaching has improved rapidly in many, but not all, subject areas.
- Performance management systems have been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning within the college. The Principal and senior leaders know their staff well. All members of staff have clarity about their roles and are held to account by leaders within the college. Staff say they are motivated; one said that she now felt 'allowed to flourish'.
- The Principal, senior leaders and the governing body have paid a great deal of attention to the curriculum that students study within the college. In previous years, students had studied some subjects where they were not successful and as a result did not gain the qualifications that they could have done. The current leadership of the college has ensured that students have a range of courses that suit them and this has led to more success. The curriculum is personalised and individualised. Students said that they appreciated the opportunity to study subjects that they enjoy, particularly photography.
- The senior leaders of the college, including governors, are focused on ensuring that the achievement of students is at national levels or above in 2015. The college's progress and attainment data are much more reliable and there have been extensive checks to ensure that assessments are accurate. The majority of students have a personal programme of work. However some individual targets set are not ambitious enough for some students and often do not inform the next stage of their learning.
- Pupil premium funding is used well. Senior leaders have appropriately identified the intervention activities that support rapid improvement and as a result, the achievement gap is reducing between those students entitled to pupil premium funding and other students within the college.
- The progress, attendance and behaviour of students who require alternative provision, is tracked effectively and communication between the college and the providers is good.
- Students are well prepared for life in modern Britain and have numerous opportunities to develop their social, moral, cultural and spiritual education. Issues of discrimination are rare but are swiftly dealt with when they occur.
- The Principal, senior leaders and governors have vastly improved the image of the college and governors

now say that the local community has a much more positive view. Displays are of high quality and there are many examples where the success of students and members of staff are celebrated. The Principal takes every opportunity to foster good relations and promote equality of opportunity.

- The advice and guidance that students receive is good. There are dedicated activities, including the involvement of many external partners, to ensure that students make well-informed choices for the next stage in their learning, career or training. It is predicted that in 2015, all students will be in education or training once they leave Year 11.
- The Collaborative Academies Trust is effective in ensuring appropriate challenge to the Principal and Chair of Governors. There are regular 'Team around the School' meetings, where performance data and key improvement plan actions are discussed. The Trust works with the Principal to commission high quality additional support for the college. Leaders within the Trust know the college well.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The college receives outstanding support and challenge from the governing body. Governors know about students' performance data and how they compare with other schools.
 - The Collaborative Academies Trust has ensured that the governance of the college is local and highly effective. The Chair of the Governing Body is very experienced and a national leader of governance.
 - An audit has been conducted to ensure governors bring an appropriate range of skills and, as a result, the college has a highly professional and committed group of governors.
 - There is an appropriate committee structure and key committees meet regularly in order to support the Principal drive rapid change. Governors know about the improvements to the quality of teaching. They know how senior leaders manage the performance of teachers. They understand how good teaching is rewarded and underperformance tackled.
 - Governors know the key priorities for the college; they ensure the senior leaders are appropriately held to account.
 - Minutes of the governing body are comprehensive and action points are recorded in a clear and concise way. This helps governors make sure that actions take place and are not just talked about. One parent governor stated that, 'We are now a 'can do' governing body rather than a 'can't be bothered to do' governing body!'

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. The systems that the leaders of the college have put in place to ensure that all students behave well are having a positive effect.
- Students arrive to lessons promptly and settle to work quickly. They show a positive attitude to learning and listen maturely to each other and to their teachers.
- Students take a pride in their appearance and are proud of the college. Because of this, the students act as positive ambassadors within the college and the local community. Students told inspectors that they felt 'lucky to be at this school.'
- The majority of students value the vertical house system, where students from different year groups are in the same house. One student stated, 'The vertical tutoring has made a big difference, boundaries have been broken down.' Some students within the sixth form appreciate this system less. Although they take seriously, and enjoy, their role within their house, they say they would appreciate further opportunities to meet formally with their own peers.
- The behaviour of students that attend alternative provision is tightly monitored and there is regular communication between the alternative providers and the college. As a result, students behave well and are achieving their targets.
- Attendance is below the national average. The number of students who are persistently absent is too high.

The college's plans to improve this are increasingly rigorous.

- The number of fixed-term and permanent exclusions have recently reduced, dramatically so within 2014.

Safety

- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good. One student told inspectors, 'I know someone cares about me on a daily basis'.
- There are no areas within the college where students feel unsafe and incidents of bullying are rare. Students are aware of the procedures they need to follow if they have concerns. They are well informed and appreciate they can use the 'bully box' if they need to. Many issues relating to bullying, including e-safety, racism and homophobia are covered well during tutor periods and these issues are further reinforced in assemblies and in displays across the college.
- Almost all the parents who responded to Parent View said that their child felt safe at the college.

The quality of teaching is good

- Systems to manage the performance of teachers have led to dramatic improvements in the quality of teaching. In a short period of time the Principal and governing body have made sure that the college is fully staffed with specialist teachers. Students said that they appreciated having continuity of teaching and that this had been a key factor in helping them improve their grades.
- The subject knowledge of the majority of teachers is good. As a result, teachers make learning enjoyable and imaginative. In one mathematics lesson, the teacher was able to explain clearly the way in which a range of problems was solved by showing students how to do it. The teacher then allowed students to work together to solve a range of similar and much more challenging problems. The progress of students accelerated as a result.
- In another lesson, students were taking photographs of someone riding a bicycle. The students were capturing a range of interesting images and were clearly enjoying the experience. The photographs they produced were impressive.
- The rapid improvements in the quality of teaching, and the improved systems to detect those students who are slipping behind in their learning have contributed greatly to the improved literacy of students. There are many opportunities for students to read and for extended writing to take place. Catch-up funding is appropriately targeted to support students in Year 7 improve their basic skills in reading and writing.
- In a short period of time the quality of teachers' written feedback has improved; teachers use the college system of the pink and green pen to point out what works well and what could be improved. The written feedback in English is exemplary; however, other faculty areas do not always ensure that students experience a similarly consistent response to their work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- In 2014, the attainment of students achieving 5A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics was below average. This result, however, was the best ever for the college. As a result of the rapid progress made this year, reliable predictions for 2015 indicate that the percentage of students achieving 5A*-C GCSEs including English and mathematics will be above average.
- In 2014, the percentage of students who made expected progress within mathematics was above average but was significantly below average within English. In previous years, there had been too much emphasis on students gaining a GCSE grade C, particularly in English and mathematics, at the expense of students' making expected progress. The college now has an accurate focus on students' progress and predictions

for 2015 in both English and mathematics suggest the proportion of students making expected progress will be above average.

- In English 2014, disadvantaged students achieved one GCSE lower than other students within the college and one-and-a-half GCSE grades below other students nationally. In mathematics, disadvantaged students achieved one GCSE grade lower than other students within the college and one grade nationally. The gaps in performance between disadvantaged students and other students within the college are closing rapidly.
- In 2014, students' performance in religious education and sports studies was not as strong as in other subjects. This has improved this year and students are now achieving well.
- In 2014, too few of the most-able students made more than expected progress. This was because some students were not challenged enough in lessons to excel. While the picture is much improved this year, and the most-able students are on course to do very well, in some classes they are not given sufficiently demanding work to do.
- The college have ensured that disabled students and those who have special educational needs follow more appropriate courses than in previous years. The support for students with additional needs has been reorganised. This has meant that students now receive in-class support and are taught by subject specialists. As a result, these students are making better progress.
- The college carefully considers the specific needs of students that require alternative provision. Seven students are educated off site by six alternative providers, five students in Y11 and two students in Y9. These students are well supported to achieve well and are on track to meet their targets.
- Students develop and increasingly apply a wide range of skills in reading, writing, mathematics, and communication. As a result, they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Pupils read widely and the Year 7 catch-up funding is targeted well. This helps these pupils to make good progress in developing their basic skills.
- The achievement of students from minority ethnic groups, including those who speak English as an additional language, is good. The progress of these students is also rapidly improving. This is as a result of changes to the curriculum to suit their individual needs and targeted support that includes them fully in learning.
- The college does not enter students early for GCSE examinations.

The sixth form provision

is good

- The leadership of the sixth form is good. Nearly all indicators suggest improvement. There is now a clear plan to ensure that students make at least good progress and are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- There is now a more demanding entrance policy. The careers advice and guidance that students receive is good. Leaders provide students with a range of carefully considered courses, which are now more appropriate.
- Students within the sixth form appreciate the changes that have taken place recently. They feel that behaviour has improved, and is now good, and say that they feel safe, happy and do not want to miss lessons. There is an appreciation of the work the college undertakes to promote British values, including democracy and personal responsibility. Students value the opportunities provided to be involved with a range of extra-curricular activity including working with The National Citizen Service and Young Enterprise schemes.

- Students in the sixth form are making good progress. There was some improvement in 2014, particularly at A2. However, some key results remained below average. The predictions for 2015 are more accurate and students are on course to reach standards that are at least in line with the national average.

- There is an increasing culture of aspiration and the expectations of students and their teachers are high. This is reflected in the fact that one in four students has received offers from the coveted Russell Group universities. Leaders acknowledge that there is still work to do to ensure that students' individual curriculum targets are sufficiently challenging and that students are completely clear about how these can be achieved.

- Data and tracking are now more robust and students' performance, including that of disadvantaged students, is reviewed regularly. All the students who re-took their GCSE English in Year 12 were successful. The quality of teaching is good and particularly so in art and photography. Study programmes are regularly reviewed and monitored and the curriculum is increasingly more appropriate for all students.

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

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| Unique reference number | 138932 |
| Local authority | Northamptonshire |
| Inspection number | 461992 |

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

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|---|---------------------------------|
| 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 | 1243 |
| Of which, number on roll in sixth form | 150 |
| Appropriate authority | Collaborative Academies Trust |
| Chair | Chris Hilliard |
| Principal | Debbie Morrison OBE |
| Date of previous school inspection | 5 June 2013 |
| Telephone number | 01604 716106 |
| Fax number | Not applicable |
| Email address | admin@kingsthorpecollege.org.uk |

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