

Cranbury College

Cranbury Road, Reading, RG30 2TS

Inspection dates

21–22 November 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Resilient and determined leadership has led to rapid improvements in teaching and students' achievement. The different elements of the college share a strong sense of purpose and ambition for the future.
- Students achieve well. They take great strides forward in their personal development and in their learning, and are very well prepared for the next steps in their lives.
- The staff go to great lengths to ensure that what they provide is tailored to the individual needs of each student.
- Teachers and support staff are skilful and adept at managing students' behaviour. Relationships between staff and students are warm and supportive.
- Staff know individual students very well and teachers take full account of their starting points and needs when planning lessons.
- Students' behaviour improves greatly when they start at the college. Students of all backgrounds get on well with one another.
- Teaching is good and improving quickly because the approach to managing teachers' performance and promoting their professional development is systematic and thorough.
- The management committee is supportive of the college's drive for improvement and keeps a close eye on how well it is doing.
- The college works exceptionally well with a wide range of other organisations.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There are minor weaknesses in teaching that mean that students do not always make the best possible progress in lessons.
- On occasions, students do not have sufficient scope to work on their own or do things for themselves.
- Students sometimes lack the confidence to talk about their work and think about what they have learned.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection was carried out with half a day’s notice. The inspectors carried out 15 observations of teaching and learning across all of the college’s sites and at alternative provision. Almost all of the observations were conducted jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team, other leaders and teachers, the Chair and another member of the Management Committee, the attendance officer and a representative of the local authority. They also held discussions with students. There were no responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) but inspectors took account of the college’s recent surveys of the views of parents and carers, staff and students.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documents including the college’s self-evaluation and its plans for improvement, records relating to behaviour, attendance and students’ progress, the staff handbook, the outcomes of external reviews commissioned by the college and policies and procedures for protecting students and keeping them safe.

Inspection team

Linda McGill, Lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

Sandra Teacher

Additional Inspector

Lily Evans

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Cranbury College provides services on four sites for pupils and students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools or who have emotional, behavioural or medical needs that prevent them from attending school. The majority of students are of secondary school age and attend either the Cranbury Road site or the Creative Education (CRED) provision for students in Year 11. A small number of primary-age pupils attend the College Road site. The college also provides individual learning programmes, including home tuition, for a number of students. The college includes a teaching service at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. In addition, it provides behaviour support services to schools across the local authority.
- Students join and leave the college at all times throughout the year and most attend for about a year before returning to mainstream school or moving on to special school.
- The majority of students are of White British heritage. Others come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Around three quarters of students are currently known to be eligible for free school meals and two students are looked after by the local authority; the college receives additional funding known as the pupil premium to support these students. Three quarters of the students are boys. About a quarter of the students have a statement of special educational needs or are undergoing assessment.
- The college works in partnership with a number of alternative providers.
- The headteacher works half time at the college and for the remainder of her time is the local authority's senior officer with responsibility for reducing exclusions. The deputy headteacher takes charge in her absence.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to boost students' progress even further, strive to ensure that all teaching matches the very best by:
 - pinpointing exactly what teachers and support staff need to do to move their performance forward, and further encouraging the sharing of outstanding practice
 - encouraging staff to stand back where appropriate and allow students greater scope to learn, do and find things out independently
 - ensuring staff help students develop more confidence and self-assurance in talking about their work and their learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Many students have experienced disruptions to their schooling before attending Cranbury College and their attainment is generally below what is expected for their age when they start. They settle in quickly, make good progress in their personal development and begin to show positive attitudes to school and to learning. This has a good impact on their academic progress.
- The college's assessments show that younger pupils generally make progress at a good rate and begin to narrow the gap on what is expected for their age in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Great emphasis is placed on making sure that as many older students as possible gain GCSE passes and other accredited qualifications, especially in English and mathematics. The proportion gaining at least one qualification has risen year on year. In 2012, the large majority of students left Year 11 with one qualification, and a substantial proportion did much better than this. Just under two thirds of students gained GCSE passes in both English and mathematics. Most of the students made good progress from their starting points, and some made exceptional progress.
- The college's analysis of assessments and examination results show that there is little difference between the achievement of pupils from different backgrounds, and that those eligible for the pupil premium do as well as others. In 2012, boys made better progress and were more successful in their examinations than girls. Conclusions cannot be drawn from this, given the small size of the groups and the circumstances of individuals, but the college is carefully monitoring assessments to make sure that this pattern is not repeated.
- Appropriate emphasis is given to boosting students' skills in English and mathematics. Pupils have made particularly good progress in the primary phase in learning letters and sounds; two boys showed great pleasure in seeing how many letter sounds they could say in a minute. In a mathematics lesson in Year 10, students confidently multiplied mixed numbers and fractions in their heads and explained how they worked out the answers. Both younger and older students enjoy reading. Good quality work on display showed students have thought carefully about the character of Lady Macbeth and have written perceptively about her motives.
- During this inspection, students thoroughly enjoyed an outdoor experience with one of the alternative providers. As well as boosting their confidence and self-esteem exceptionally well, the chance to ride mountain bikes in the rain fostered team spirit and joy in taking part. This made a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There are a few occasions when students do not make as much progress as they should in lessons. Sometimes this is because they are reluctant to show their work or talk about what they have learned. Slower progress also happens when the adults do not give the students enough time or space to try things on their own.

The quality of teaching is good

- One of the key strengths in teaching is the quality of relationships that adults have with the students. Great care is taken to establish a supportive, positive atmosphere in lessons and with students who are taught at home. Teachers and support staff know the students very well and use this knowledge to manage them skilfully, patiently and sensitively. The students recognise and value the interest that is taken in them as individuals. In discussions, they said they felt the teachers listen to them and understand them.
- In this positive environment, the students make good gains in their personal development; incidents of unacceptable behaviour become less frequent and attendance typically improves. However, the staff know that this is not the whole story. They understand that if students are to do well when they return to mainstream school or move on to another school, work or college, they must do as well as they can in their academic studies, too. The staff have high expectations for the students' achievement.
- Teachers plan their lessons carefully and take account of the starting points of individual

students, including how well they can read. During lessons, they are quick to note the students' responses and how well they are learning, and adapt the lesson accordingly. Praise is given for effort and achievement. Older students' attention is drawn to what is needed to gain their target grades at GCSE and younger pupils have charts on the wall that show them how well they are doing.

- It was not possible to observe teaching at the hospital during this inspection. The staff liaise closely with schools and plan work for students that dovetails with what they are currently studying. Written comments from past students are very positive. One student was clearly very pleased that the teacher had helped him understand something he had been struggling with in his GCSE mathematics coursework.
- Support staff and teachers work closely together and evidently want the students to do as well as they can. This can occasionally lead to the staff being too protective; instead of standing back to allow students to struggle for a short time with something they find challenging, they intervene to demonstrate what to do. It also means that the pace in lessons is sometimes comfortable, rather than brisk.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Students' behaviour typically improves markedly when they start at the college. 'This school caused me to have a major change in my attitude,' said one. Students generally behave well. They listen to adults and each other and concentrate and work steadily in lessons, although they are sometimes passive and compliant rather than actively involved. When teaching is at its best, however, students' enthusiasm is ignited and they show genuine pleasure in learning.
- At break times students socialise amicably and they move willingly back to lessons when asked. Questionnaires completed by students, their parents and carers and staff showed that there are no major concerns about behaviour, and that lessons are not often disrupted.
- Students said that they feel safe at the college and know that if they have any worries or concerns the staff, and in particular their key worker, will help them sort things out. Well-thought-out lessons in personal, social and health education help them consider important issues that affect them, and promote their understanding of how to keep themselves safe in different situations, including when using the internet.
- The college's records show that bullying and racist incidents are uncommon, and students confirm this. The students readily accept one another's differences and get on well together.
- Rates of attendance have improved steadily year on year; however, comparisons are of limited use because the cohort of students is constantly changing. The college's efforts have a considerable impact on the attendance of individuals.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The college's leaders have achieved remarkable success in bringing unity and a common sense of purpose across all aspects of its provision. Cranbury College's core values underpin all of its work and are obvious in the way that the needs of the pupils and students are put first. Its success in boosting students' personal development and raising their achievement illustrates clearly the college's firm commitment to equality of opportunity. It also confirms that the college has an excellent capacity to improve still further.
- A great deal has been achieved since the college was last inspected, because of the unwavering efforts of leaders and staff at all levels to improve provision and help all students to experience success. Leaders evaluate the college's performance in the same way as they go about all other tasks – rigorously, thoroughly and honestly and with the next step in mind. They commission external reviews of performance to gain an objective view and validate their judgements. Records, such as assessments of students' progress and attendance, are meticulously kept.

- The needs of individual students are closely analysed and a bespoke package put together to meet them. Several alternative providers are used, but before any student attends alternative provision it is carefully researched to make sure it is suitable.
 - The management of staff's performance is a major priority and is carried out as rigorously as other aspects of the college's work. Expectations of the performance of teachers and support staff are high, and they are held to account for the progress of the students they work with. Staff are provided with training and supported to improve their practice to meet their targets. Teaching is good and improving strongly, but outstanding teaching is not yet widespread. Leaders understand that pinpointing exactly what is needed to move the teaching of individuals forward that extra notch is crucial to sustain swift improvement.
 - The curriculum rightly emphasises basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics alongside the personal, social and life skills that students need. It is highly personalised. Wherever possible, and including enrichment activities that take place after school, courses of study lead to accreditation. The curriculum makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The use of alternative provision enhances the students' experiences.
 - The staff work closely with parents and carers, emphasising students' positive developments as much as possible in order to help parents and carers overcome any reluctance they may have to engage with the college.
 - The college's arrangements for recruiting and checking staff and for protecting students and keeping them safe are thorough and well known to staff at all levels. They meet statutory requirements.
 - The local authority provides support to the college in proportion to its needs and at the college's request. For example, the authority's consultant for mathematics provided advice to help staff maximise the progress made by pupils in the primary phase.
 - The college's expertise is increasingly sought by schools within the local authority and beyond. As a result, its work has a positive impact on the lives of a great many young people.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The management committee keeps a close eye on the college's performance and shares its ambition. Its members have a secure understanding of what is working well and what the college is working towards. Staff report that they are held to account for the progress students make and that questions at management committee meetings are often challenging and thought-provoking. The committee's approach to the performance management of the headteacher is as rigorous as that of the rest of the college. Its members also monitor the outcomes of the performance management of other staff. They know exactly what pupil premium funding has been spent on, and the impact it has had on the achievement of individual students.
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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	134984
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	402660

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

Type of school	Pupil referral unit
School category	Pupil referral unit
Age range of pupils	5–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	95
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Headteacher	Gill Dunlop
Date of previous school inspection	5–6 November 2009
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