

Charlton School

Severn Drive, Dothill, Telford, TF1 3LE

Inspection dates 12–13 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires special measures.

- Standards of achievement have fallen over the last three years and leaders have failed to take sufficiently urgent action to stem the decline.
- Leaders do not have high enough expectations of the academic standards that students should achieve.
- Leaders have failed to ensure that teaching over time is good enough to improve achievement rapidly.
- Leaders, including governors, do not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. As a result, their plans for improvement are not sufficiently precise, detailed or urgent.
- Governors have not been effective in holding school leaders to account for the declining standards.
- Students, including disabled students or those who have special educational needs and the most able, underachieve because they do not make enough progress.
- The attainment and progress of disadvantaged students is declining and gaps in achievement between them and other students are growing.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what students should achieve in lessons and so they do not plan activities that challenge students to think deeply and work hard. They are too accepting of insufficient or poorly presented work.
- Teachers' assessments of students' attainment are not accurate, so leaders cannot confidently use this information to make improvements.
- The quality of teachers' marking and feedback to students varies from good to poor. In many books, marking does not help students to know how to improve their work.
- Behaviour requires improvement. In too many lessons, the work set does not challenge and interest students so they become distracted, chat and do not work hard enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The school is a safe place and students feel safe in school. They are polite, considerate and courteous as they move around the cramped school buildings.
- The school is a caring community: a fact recognised and valued by students, parents and staff.
- The social, moral and cultural development of students is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 41 lessons; 15 of these were carried out with members of the school’s senior leadership team. Inspectors also observed an assembly, morning tutor periods and visited the school’s local ‘Compass Point’ facility where some students spend part of their week. They also observed students’ behaviour between lessons, at break and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors looked at students’ work in lessons and also as a separate activity.
- Meetings were held with senior and middle leaders, governors and representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered 116 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire as well as the school’s own survey of parents’ views and an email that a parent sent to the lead inspector.
- Inspectors considered 47 staff questionnaire responses.
- Formal meetings were held with four groups of students and numerous informal discussions with students also took place.
- A wide range of documentation was reviewed including the school’s self-evaluation and plans, school policies, school data about achievement, teaching and behaviour, and minutes of governing body meetings.

Inspection team

Alun Williams, Lead inspector	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Keith Thomas	Additional Inspector
Helen Owen	Additional Inspector
Ian Jones	Additional Inspector
Julian Souter	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Information about this school

- Charlton is a larger-than-average secondary school.
- Most students are of White British heritage and very few students speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students or those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of students who are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and for those who are looked after by the local authority) is below the national average.
- A small number of students in Years 10 and 11 take vocational courses off site, provided by Telford College of Arts and Technology. Some students spend part of their week at 'Compass Point', an off-site unit run by the school.
- The school meets the current floor standards, which set out the government's minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- Charlton works in partnership with Dothill Primary School forming the 'Dothill and Charlton Sports and Learning Community'. The Principal leads both schools, supported by separate Heads of Secondary and Primary Phase.
- The school is due to relocate to a new, purpose-built site early in 2016.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all students, especially disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs and the most-able students make good or better progress, by ensuring that teachers:
 - have high expectations of what students should achieve in lessons, in particular of the quantity and quality of work that students produce
 - plan lessons that challenge and interest students and cause them to think deeply and work hard, so that they are engaged in their learning and low-level disruption is eliminated
 - plan lessons that enable disabled students or those who have special educational needs to make progress, by making sure that they take into account what these students already understand and can do
 - provide students with marking and feedback that is regular and which helps them to improve their work.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, so that there is rapid improvement in the achievement of students, especially disadvantaged students, disabled students and those with special educational needs and the most-able students, by ensuring that:
 - all leaders and governors have a correct view of the school's strengths and weaknesses based upon detailed and accurate evaluations of teaching, achievement and behaviour
 - improvement plans urgently address students' underachievement
 - aspirational attainment targets are set that raise expectations of what all students should achieve
 - teachers are able to make accurate assessments of students' attainment
 - leaders and teachers are set targets for their work that are clearly focused on the school's urgent need to raise standards

- training for individual teachers is based on an accurate evaluation of their strengths and weaknesses and is targeted to have maximum impact on improving achievement
- all subject leaders have the skills and capacity to improve teaching and raise standards in their subjects
- the pupil premium grant is spent effectively to rapidly improve the progress of disadvantaged students
- the progress that disabled students or those who have special educational needs are making, both in lessons and through extra support, is carefully tracked
- governors have the knowledge and skills that mean they are not reliant on school leaders for their understanding of the school's performance, and are therefore able to hold leaders properly to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are inadequate

- Standards of achievement, especially progress, have declined over the past three years and leaders have not taken urgent, decisive action to reverse this trend. Although leaders have taken steps this year to improve teaching and raise standards, these are not yet having sufficient impact to guarantee the rapid improvement that is needed. In particular, teaching is not good enough to secure good progress for all students.
- Leaders and governors have an unrealistic and over-generous view of how well the school is doing. There has been a history of unreliable data leading to inaccurate evaluations of the current achievement of students, of the quality of teaching in school and of standards of behaviour in lessons. As a result, weaknesses in teaching and behaviour have not been identified and tackled quickly enough.
- Leaders' ambition for what students should achieve is not high enough. Students' targets are not aspirational and this contributes to a culture where academic expectations of students are too low across the school.
- Although leaders now collect teachers' assessment data regularly and have systems in place to analyse it, the data is not reliable. In recent years, predictions of how students will achieve have not been accurate and actual results have been much lower. Therefore, leaders' predictions of greatly improved achievement in 2015 cannot be relied upon.
- Leaders' plans for improvement have not addressed the urgent need to tackle underachievement in the school.
- Leaders' inaccurate evaluation of teaching has meant that they have not correctly identified weaknesses and then addressed them through the management of teachers' performance. Teachers and leaders' appraisal targets have not been sufficiently focused on raising achievement and, as a result, training has not addressed weaknesses in teaching and therefore has not consistently led to improvement.
- The pupil premium grant is not used effectively. Although leaders and governors are clear about how the grant is being spent, they are neither evaluating its impact nor ensuring that it is deployed to reverse the declining achievement of disadvantaged students in the school.
- Leaders are not measuring the impact that different strategies to support disabled students or those who have special educational needs are having. As a result, leaders do not know how well each strategy is working and they do not know how much progress each student is making.
- Changes put in place by leaders this year have meant that subject leaders are now more accountable for the quality of teaching and standards of achievement in their areas of responsibility. Leaders now collect data more regularly, and are taking action to make it more reliable. It is too early to judge the impact of these changes and subject leaders have not had enough training and guidance to improve teaching consistently and raise standards in their subjects.
- Leaders have successfully developed an ethos of care and community at Charlton and discrimination is not tolerated. A spirit of openness, integrity and honesty pervades the school; a tone set by the principal. However, the school does not effectively promote equality of opportunity because groups of students, including those who are disadvantaged, are underachieving.
- The school's curriculum is broad and balanced and prepares students well for life in modern Britain. There is a good choice of options at Key Stage 4 and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities supplements the formal curriculum. Personal, social and health education effectively helps students to understand issues of democracy, tolerance and respect for others and the rule of law and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. For example, after listening to speeches from each candidate, students elected the school's head girl and boy, with every student having a vote.

- Students are helped to make choices about their next steps when they leave school through specific lessons and one-to-one interviews with a careers advisor. For the last two years, as a result of the advice and guidance they are given, all students have moved on to further education, employment or training after leaving Charlton.
- Leaders carefully monitor the attendance, behaviour and progress of the small number of students who study for part of the week away from the school. These students attend regularly, behave well and are successful. In 2014, all such students passed their courses and many progressed to a college course as a result.
- Safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements. Procedures to keep students safe are effective and well understood.
- The local authority has provided more help for the school this year following its evaluation of the school as one needing more support. However, the local authority's evaluation of the school's effectiveness has also been over generous and its intervention has not been sufficiently speedy or decisive.
- The school should not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have an over-generous view of the school's effectiveness and have failed to hold leaders to account for the declining standards over the past three years. This is because they rely too much on leaders to provide them with information and, more importantly, to explain its significance.
 - The governing body changed its committee structure recently in order to provide more challenge to school leaders. As a result, governors are now willing and able to ask questions of leaders about the quality of teaching and students' achievement, but they are too ready to accept the answers that they are given without any deeper challenge and scrutiny. For example, they do not understand the significance of much of the data and specifically how poor the progress of students has been over recent years.
 - Governors, through appropriate committees, are fully involved in the management of the principal's performance and they consider all pay recommendations for teachers, including what is done to reward good teaching and to tackle underperformance. However, they have failed to ensure that appraisal targets set across the school are focused on the urgent need to raise achievement.

The behaviour and safety of pupils requires improvement

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students requires improvement because there is low-level disruption in too many lessons, where students chat, distract others and do not work as hard as they could. This results in students failing to make as much progress as they should.
- Between lessons, at morning breaks and lunchtimes, students are friendly, courteous and polite to each other and adults. They move around the school sensibly and this is to their credit given the cramped nature of the current school site.
- Fixed-term exclusions from school are a little lower than national figures and permanent exclusions are very rare. Students at risk of being excluded spend some of their week off-site at the school's 'Compass Point' facility where staff help them to think about their mistakes and, as a result, they improve their behaviour.
- Teachers, and other adults in the school, are very committed to helping each student. Relationships between adults and students are good and students reported that they like their teachers and appreciate their care.
- Staff closely monitor the attendance and behaviour of students who spend part of their week studying away from the school. These students attend their courses regularly, are kept safe and behave well.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. Students feel safe and are safe in school. Most parents who responded to the Parent View online questionnaire agree that the school is doing well in keeping their children safe.
- Students, parents and the school's records indicate that any bullying that occurs is dealt with effectively. Most students spoken to during the inspection confirmed their confidence in staff to deal effectively with any bullying they might experience.
- Students know how to keep themselves safe. A good programme, taught through assemblies and personal, social and health education, helps them to develop this understanding. For example, in morning tutor times students are taught about some of the potential dangers they might face when they are online. As a result, students have a good understanding of online dangers and are able to use the internet safely.
- Students' attendance is consistently better than the national average. They enjoy coming to school and most parents agree that their children are happy in school.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching is inadequate because, over time, it has resulted in too many students failing to make the progress that they should and therefore underachieving. This has been the case across a wide range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, geography and history.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what their students are able to achieve. They do not expect students to work hard enough in lessons and they are too accepting of poorly presented work rather than insisting on high standards.
- Teachers do not consistently plan lessons that stretch and challenge students. As a result, many students are able to get by without having to think deeply or work hard and they do not make enough progress. In some lessons, insufficient challenge results in students becoming distracted, chatting and distracting others.
- The quality of marking of students' books is very variable. In many books seen, marking was infrequent and cursory, neither helping students to improve nor encouraging them to take pride in their work. The school's 'closing the gap' policy, where students correct and improve their work, is not being applied consistently. However, some good examples of marking, feedback and 'closing the gap' were seen by inspectors, for example in a design technology lesson and a mathematics class.
- There is some good provision for disabled students or those with special educational needs, for example, where small groups of students receive extra help. However, in some whole class lessons, the teaching of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is much less effective. This is because teachers do not plan activities that are well matched to what these students understand and can do. The students then struggle to understand the tasks set and do not make progress.
- Teaching assistants are well used in some lessons, providing skilful support for students who need extra help. However, in other lessons, teaching assistants' expertise is not used well as they do little more than hand out materials.
- The school's approach to literacy is beginning to have a positive impact in Years 7 and 8 where students have regular reading sessions. A current focus on extended writing is also evident in Years 7 and 8 but less so in other years. A focus on whole-school numeracy is at an early stage of development and its impact is not yet evident in lessons other than mathematics.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge but do not use this well enough. In the best lessons, they use questioning skilfully to help students to explore ideas and deepen their understanding of the work that they are doing. In less successful lessons, teachers are too ready to accept brief spoken answers from students.

The achievement of pupils is inadequate

- Students are significantly underachieving. Recent year groups who left the school with broadly average examination results had started the school with levels of skills that were significantly above average, so did not make enough progress. Attainment has declined over the past three years, despite the school predicting that it would rise.
- Students do not make enough progress in their time at the school across a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science, history and geography. The rate of progress that students make in all of these subjects has declined over the past three years and is now very low. For example, the progress made by students in mathematics in 2014 placed the school in the bottom 10% of schools nationally, while their progress across all subjects placed the school in the bottom 15%.
- Disadvantaged students are falling further behind other students nationally. The attainment and progress of disadvantaged students have declined over the past three years, so that the large gaps between these students and others nationally have grown even bigger.
- In 2014 disadvantaged students in English were two-thirds of a grade behind others nationally and nearly a grade behind other students in the school. In mathematics, the gap between disadvantaged students and others nationally had grown to nearly two grades, while that gap with others in school had grown to a grade-and-a-half.
- The most-able students in the school are underachieving. The number of A and A* GCSE grades achieved by these students has been low across a number of subjects for three years. The percentage of most-able students making expected progress in English and mathematics was well below the national figure in 2014.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are not making enough progress. This is because teaching in lessons is not ensuring that they make progress and the impact of extra support that they receive is not measured, so leaders do not know what is helping and what is not.
- The quality and quantity of work that students produce in lessons varies greatly. In too many lessons and in too many books it is evident that students are not making as much progress as they could and should.
- The school's data for Key Stage 4 indicate that current progress is improving significantly across most subjects and for most groups of students. However, this data has been very unreliable in the past and evidence from lessons and students' work does not support leaders' views about the rapid rate of improvement. The school's data for progress at Key Stage 3 contain so much variation that leaders cannot rely on it.
- There are some indicators of improvement. For example, inspectors saw students achieving well in Year 11 English lessons and over time in their work. This supports the school's view that 2015 will see some improvement in GCSE results.
- The small number of students who study away from the school for part of the week follow appropriate, vocational courses and are successful. In 2014, all such students passed their courses and progressed to a college course as a result when they left school.
- The school does not use early or multiple entries for GCSE courses.

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	123597
Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	461968

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	1149
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Bob Kiernan
Principal	Nick Renshaw
Date of previous school inspection	12 October 2011
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