

How good are we at Colmers?

Colmers has been judged to be Good in its last two inspections in April 2013 and again in November 2014; you can read those reports by following the links and gaining an insight into the detail of those valuable experiences.

However, schools are constantly changing and at any given time there will be both strong and weak elements that we need to address and either improve or maintain. Schools and headteachers often have some reservations about a frank and public appraisal of their school in case families become worried and question the school they have chosen for their children. At Colmers we do not worry about that sort of thing because we know that through your children and your own experiences you will have a view on how good (or not) our school is for your child.

Every school has some students doing brilliantly. Every school has some students not doing so brilliantly. The goal for us and every other school is, therefore, to make sure that all or most students are doing brilliantly and that fewer and fewer students are unsuccessful.

The success of your children is ultimately defined by the grades they get when they leave the school in Year 11 or Year 13. This is one way to judge a school and for you to judge your child's education. But we must also look at other things like their behaviour, attendance, punctuality and personal development – have they become a good person, ready to contribute to society and be a source of pride for their family and the school?

In the spirit of openness what follows is a summary of where we are as a school right now in October 2017. The table below summarises a number of themes and then explores where we are strong, where we are weak and, most importantly, what are we all going to do about those things that need to be better in the next three years.

There are nine different parts to this evaluation and they include:

-  Attendance and Punctuality
-  Behaviour
-  Attainment
-  Progress
-  Personal Development
-  Social, Moral, Spiritual and Cultural Development (SMSC)
-  Safeguarding
-  Our School Site

You will soon notice just how much can only be achieved through a team effort involving me and my colleagues, but also your children and you as parents and carers. Real and rapid school improvement might begin in my office but it will succeed or fail depending on whether those goals are shared in the hearts and minds of us all – adults and students!

Themes	Our Strengths	Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development	Big Questions for us all	The "Big 3" things we are doing to address this...
Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The number of students with 100% attendance has risen from 77 to 117 over the past three years. ✓ The number of students with 97%+ attendance has risen from 385 to 472 over the past three years. ✓ The number of students with 95%+ attendance has risen from 547 to 653 over the past three years. ✓ The number of students with less than 95% attendance has fallen from 542 to 494 over the past three years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Overall attendance at the school is weak (94.1% in 2016-17) because a large minority have failed to improve their attendance. ✗ Last year (2016-17) there were still 494 students with less than 95% attendance. ✗ Whilst the number of Persistently Absent students (less than 90%) has fallen from 197 to 173 students, it remains too high. ✗ Attendance (and lateness) worsens the older students get. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Why are older students much more likely to be absent from school? ✎ To what extent are parents and carers always doing their bit to improve standards? Do they lose some control or authority as their children get older? ✎ How can the school truly know when absence through illness is unavoidable or when the student just needs to be more resilient and get out of bed? ✎ Why isn't the fact that poor attendance leads to poor GCSE results enough of a deterrent for some students? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ➊ Extend our social and emotional inclusion team, to work directly with Persistently Absent students and their families. ➋ Significantly increase the demands placed on students who are absent to catch up on their missed work and ensure no progress is lost. ➌ Appropriately sanction and reward those students whose attendance wavers between 90% and 95%.
Punctuality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The new 8:42am bell and gate closure has massively improved the start of the school day. ✓ Well over 1000 out of 1100 students always get to school on time. ✓ The extended first break and split lunches have completely removed all rushing to eat and therefore all can get to classes on time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Approximately 20 students are late for school each day. ✗ Students who are late tend to be the same 30-40 students. ✗ Lateness (and attendance) worsens the older students get. ✗ We know that many students are staying up very late watching on-line content (e.g. Netflix) or playing on-line games (e.g. X-Box / PS4) without their parents or carers' knowledge. This affects their punctuality (and their attendance). E.g. the morning after the midnight launch of major new games (e.g. Fifa 2018). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Why are the same small number of students late for school so frequently? ✎ Should we reward good time-keeping or simply punish lateness? ✎ Why are older students much more likely to be late to school? ✎ To what extent are parents and carers always doing their bit to improve standards? Do they lose some control or authority as their children get older? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ➊ Build on the 8:42 gate closer and roll call to sharpen up the start of every day including registration and a focus for learning. ➋ Provide general workshops at future Target Setting Days and parents'/carers' evenings <i>and</i> one-to-one support for parents and carers who are struggling to ensure their children arrive at school on time. ➌ Pinpoint specific students and work directly with them and their parents/carers to bring about sustained improvements.

Theme	Our Strengths	Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development	Big Questions for us all	The “Big 3” things we are doing to address this...
Behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Year on year fall in the number of serious incidents leading to fixed term exclusions. ✓ Much greater intolerance of poor behaviour by students. ✓ Very low reported incidents of ‘traditional’ bullying. ✓ Split lunches means more space and less minor and serious incidents of misbehaviour. ✓ Renaissance Centre very successfully reintegrates the vast majority of students back into normal lessons. ✓ Falling number of students in senior staff detentions. ✓ Fantastic behaviours and attitudes to learning amongst our new Year 7 recruits to The Bridge – the very best ever! ✓ Student behaviour improves as they get older with serious incidents or disruption rarer as students enter Middle School and the oldest year groups. ✓ Falling number of students having to be isolated for poor behaviour. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Four permanent exclusions per year for the past three years. ✗ Too many students report some low level disruption of their learning. ✗ Regular instances of on-line abusiveness between students, sometimes involving siblings and parents. ✗ Rare, but occasional, instances of cyber-bullying rising from poor empathy amongst perpetrators. ✗ Occasionally, a lack of shared common values and agreement about acceptable behaviours and language with parents / carers. ✗ In the past the mixture of our youngest (Years 7 and 8) and older (Years 9, 10 and 11) on a cramped playground didn’t always bring about the best in either age group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👤 Why do some children go through school with barely a single incident of poor behaviour, yet it’s a weekly (or even daily) issue for others? 👤 How can we be sure which student are <i>unwilling</i> to behave and those who are <i>unable</i> to behave? 👤 How much silly and minor behaviour could be eradicated if we, as teachers, got better at designing lessons that engaged and motivated all groups of students? 👤 How can we invest in activities on the playground to positively engage and deter students from silly or irritating behaviour? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ➊ Provide general workshops at future Target Setting Days and parents’/carers’ evenings <i>and</i> one-to-one support for parents and carers who are struggling to with children who misbehave at school and / or at home / in the community. ➋ Provide greater opportunities for teachers to collaborate with one another to plan lessons and activities that better engage, excite and motivate the least engaged and motivated students at Colmers. ➌ Refine our rewards and sanctions procedures in Lower School so that we can ‘Colmerise’ their behaviours for learning from the very first days.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Our Strengths</i>	<i>Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development</i>	<i>Big Questions for us all</i>	<i>The “Big 3” things we are doing to address this...</i>
<i>Attainment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The proportion of Year 11 students in 2017 who left with a pass in English was 66%. ✓ The proportion of Year 11 students in 2017 who left with a pass in Maths was also 66%. ✓ The proportion of Year 11 students in 2017 who left with a pass in two or more of the Triple Sciences rose from 42% to 54%. ✓ The average grades in the following GCSE subjects rose by two-thirds of a grade or more in 2017: English Language, Triple Sciences, Geography, Health and Social Care, Computer Science, French and Music. ✓ The average grades in the following GCSE subjects rose by one-third of a grade in 2017: Best English Language or Literature grade, History and PE. ✓ The number of higher GCSE grades has risen very sharply in the past four years: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 17 A* grades in 2016 and 60 in 2017 ○ 157 A* /A grades in 2016 and 224 in 2017 (includes the new Grades 7 to 9). ✓ The proportion of Year 13s who left with A* to B grades rose from 20% to 34%. ✓ The proportion of Year 13s who left with A* to C grades has risen from 60% to 68% in the past two years. ✓ The average A-level grade has risen to a Grade C over the past two years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ A large proportion of students into Year 7 do not arrive at or above national expectations in literacy and numeracy. They are behind and therefore need to acquire basic skills very quickly so that they can be ready to start their GCSEs in just two years. ✗ The average grade that students left with in their GCSEs was higher (from a D+ to a Grade C), but was not high enough. No subject has an average grade above a C+ and although this masks the sharp increase in higher grades over the past four years, Colmers students will need higher grades to compete against other students for A-level entry, Level 3 courses, apprenticeships and university places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👤 Who do we blame when our children underachieve? 👤 If students don't make enough progress is that because teachers have failed to push them and provide for them, or is it because students or families have not had high enough expectations? Or a mixture of these and other factors? 👤 Should we have made all students do the ECDL course (whether they wanted or needed it) to enhance our Progress 8 score? 👤 Should we narrow our curriculum and focus on eight GCSEs so that we can improve our Progress 8 score? 👤 Have Colmers students struggled more than others to adjust to the significantly harder GCSEs and A-levels? If so, why is this? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Accelerate the acquisition of oracy, literacy and numeracy skills in the first two years of life at Colmers through The Bridge. ② Refine our teaching and learning strategies in all year groups and classes so that there is greater pace and challenge in every lesson and that students and teachers share a commitment to complete a greater volume of work in any given lesson or homework activity. ③ Heads of Department to work very closely with their subject teams to fully understand the new GCSE and A-level specifications so that all teachers can easily explain and show examples of standards at the various grade boundaries so that every student knows exactly what they need to do to raise their grades in every subject.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Our Strengths</i>	<i>Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development</i>	<i>Big Questions for us all</i>	<i>The "Big 3" things we are doing to address this...</i>
<i>Progress</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students make the most rapid progress in Year 7 with outstanding progress reported in seven subjects, including English, Maths and Science. ✓ Students make good progress in Year 8 with outstanding progress reported in Art and English and good progress in D&T, Geography and History. ✓ Progress is broadly good in Year 9 but appears to slow in most subjects, with the exception of Art, History, Maths and Music. ✓ More able A-level students make outstanding progress in our sixth form (Alps 3 Grade). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Whilst progress is good in the first three years at Colmers, it is not rapid enough so that every child will be able to cope with the new GCSEs. ✗ Our 2017 Progress 8 Score is -0.43 and fell from -0.21 in 2016. This means that on average Colmers students make almost half a grade less progress than other students during their first five years at Colmers. ✗ Progress is strongest in Science, the Humanities and French, less in English and Maths and lowest in the remaining non-Ebacc subjects. Art is the major exception and is the strongest department in the school. ✗ A large proportion of students into Year 7 do not arrive at or above national expectations in literacy and numeracy. They are behind and therefore need to catch up very quickly. ✗ On average A-level students have made satisfactory or less progress in our Sixth Form (Alps Grade 5 and 7). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ Assuming the earlier we address weaknesses in literacy and numeracy the better, how might we work alongside our partner primary schools in the future? ✎ How can we be sure that the reasons children have fallen behind in primary school will not continue to affect the child in secondary school? ✎ Why is it that in England, white disadvantaged students are more likely than other groups of students to make less progress than others up and down the country? ✎ How come some schools, just like Colmers, are able to buck national trends and overcome disadvantages and all other barriers more successfully? ✎ How can everyone in a school community (parents, carers, students, teachers, senior leaders, headteacher and the Governing Body) make a unified leap forward together? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ➊ Introduce a brand new approach to target setting that more closely involves students and their families and agrees targets for every GCSE course undertaken that raises expectations of both outcomes and daily work-rates. ➋ Greater provision of time for teaching staff to work alongside one another and colleagues in other schools to co-design lessons and activities that enables all groups of students to make rapid progress and successfully tackle their known weaknesses. ➌ Heads of Department to work very closely with their subject teams to fully understand the new GCSE and A-level specifications so that all teachers can easily explain and show examples of standards at the various grade boundaries so that every student knows exactly what they need to do to raise their grades in every subject.

Theme	Our Strengths	Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development	Big Questions for us all	The “Big 3” things we are doing to address this...
Personal Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Strong <u>B</u>ehavioural <u>A</u>cademic, <u>S</u>ocial and <u>E</u>motional inclusion teams with highly specialised and experienced associate and teaching staff. ✓ Highly successful and established Learning 4 Life (CPSHE) curriculum with increased curriculum hours. ✓ Established and highly praised Student Council. ✓ Whole school initiatives that respond to relevant and prevalent social and moral issues; for example Mentors in Violence Protection (MVP) and our work with Stonewall (LGBT+). ✓ Development of the Personal Scorecard and, more recently, TARDIS, has refined our language for learning, personal development and soft skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Whilst aspirations might be high, expectations amongst students, across families and across the school needs to be much higher than ever before. Doing “okay” isn’t good enough. ✗ Too many students do not have clear life and career goals and this may be directly contributing to their lack of commitment and motivation leading to lower attendance, poorer behaviour and slower progress at school. ✗ The entire Colmers community needs to use a common vocabulary to explain why young people succeed or fail that avoid blame. This is where embedding soft-skills vocabulary that better explains success and failure in terms of a young person’s <u>t</u>hinking skills, <u>a</u>dventurousness, <u>r</u>esilience, <u>d</u>iscussion skills, <u>i</u>nitiative and <u>s</u>ocial skills (TARDIS). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👤 Whose responsibility is it to ensure every Colmers student leaves us with strong moral and ethical values and is able to contribute very positively to society? 👤 Do all, most or some parents and carers share the school’s goal for reading for pleasure, extra-curricular engagement, academic excellence and high expectations? 👤 Does the school ever let parents and carers down in some way because we fail to provide the right support, advice or guidance to overcome the very real challenges of bringing young people up in the 21st century? 👤 How can we enable the school to compensate for the disadvantages that some students endure in their childhood? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Prioritise identified underachieving students and their families to more regularly engage with our internal Careers, Information Advice and Guidance service so that aspirations are raised and higher expectations are translated into better attendance, behaviour and progress in all subjects. ② Introduce a brand new approach to target setting that more closely involves students and their families and agrees targets for every GCSE course undertaken that raises expectations of both outcomes and daily work-rates. ③ Embed the Personal Scorecard and new TARDIS framework to ensure there is a widely used and understood language for learning that promotes self-awareness and therefore greater self-confidence amongst all learners.

Theme	Our Strengths	Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development	Big Questions for us all	The "Big 3" things we are doing to address this...
SMSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regular whole school, year team and house assemblies that promote British Values around democracy, the rule of law, tolerance, individual liberty and the rule of law. ✓ Cohesive and tolerant community with relatively few incidents of homophobia, racism and sexism. Rare incidents of each and cyber-bullying appear rooted in poor empathy. ✓ Strong and popular RE Department that deliver RE for all until the age of 16. ✓ Broad and exciting school visits and activities programme that includes Duke of Edinburgh and cultural visits to WW1 battlefields, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Barcelona. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Too few opportunities created for our students to interact with young people from contrasting backgrounds, experiences and perspectives. ✗ Trips and visits programme does to ensure that every student, particularly disadvantaged students, take up the opportunities presented. ✗ Sometimes, there lacks a common language or moral framework that binds every member of the school community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ In a non-faith school with a very broad spectrum of personal beliefs and individual perspectives, how important is it that we establish common agreement on our values and communication protocols? ✎ Does the school ever let parents and carers down in some way because we fail to provide the right support, advice or guidance to overcome the very real challenges of bringing young people up in the 21st century? ✎ How do we encourage all students, particularly disadvantaged students, to participate in trips and visits that will broaden their minds and cultural experiences? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ➊ Develop a clear set of Colmers values that affects the way all stakeholders engage with one another. ➋ Increase opportunities for all students, particularly disadvantaged and less engaged students, to participate in a broad variety of school trips and visits, both locally and farther afield ➌ Create more opportunities in assemblies and in all subjects to consider a wide variety of moral and ethical dilemmas facing people locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Our Strengths</i>	<i>Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development</i>	<i>Big Questions for us all</i>	<i>The "Big 3" things we are doing to address this...</i>
<i>Safeguarding</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Actively working with external agencies to constantly review and audit our procedures and policies to ensure we remain a place of safety for all children. ✓ Large and highly skilled full qualified safeguarding team that has the skills and capacity to deal with the range of issues facing young people. ✓ A large and cohesive inclusion team that can focus on <u>B</u>ehavioural, <u>A</u>cademic, <u>S</u>ocial and <u>E</u>motional needs - known as the BASE Team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Growing number of students facing difficulties in their lives, particularly in relation to mental health. ✗ In partnership with all Birmingham and UK schools, avoiding all of our students being placed at risk of CSE, gang membership and being victim of cyber-bullying. ✗ We know that many students are staying up very late watching on-line content (e.g. Netflix) or playing on-line games (e.g. X-Box / PS4) without their parents or carers' knowledge. This affects their health and well-being, resulting in physical, academic and emotional symptoms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ How aware of parents and carers of the dangers and risks facing their children in their own home (e.g. cyber bullying and Internet misuse) and outside their home (e.g. anti-social behaviour, gang affiliation, CSE)? 👤 Should the school, continue to invest in employing specialist staff like our adolescent psychotherapists and trained social workers to ensure speedy access to highly specialised staff or focus on mainstream teaching staff? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Provide general workshops at future Target Setting Days and parents'/carers' evenings for all parents and carers to ensure they remain well-informed about the risks and safety nets associated with bringing up young people today. ② Constantly monitor, review and update the Learning 4 Life curriculum so that it remains relevant and focusses on relevant and prevalent issues facing young people today. ③ Continue to invest in highly skilled and specialised staff who are able to meet the needs of the growing number of students (locally and nationally) presenting with social and emotional health needs.

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Our Strengths</i>	<i>Our Weaknesses and Areas for Development</i>	<i>Big Questions for us all</i>	<i>The “Big 3” things we are doing to address this...</i>
<i>Our School Site</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Multi-million pound rebuild of West due to commence in the summer of 2018. ✓ Recent renovations of our Sports Hall, gymnasia, Learning Hub, The Bridge, Learning Pod and elsewhere. ✓ Quiet and very pleasant learning spaces for Year 7, 11 and sixth form. ✓ The split lunches have created much more space for all students to eat and play, leading to very few misbehaviour at lunchtime. ✓ Completely fenced and gated during school hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Not enough toilets for students (or staff). ✗ Not enough outdoor activities for students (e.g. table tennis). ✗ Wet first breaks are too disruptive. ✗ Aged and expensive to maintain and heat West Building with associated boiler problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✎ How much of the school budget ought to be allocated to pay for redecoration and refurbishment? ✎ If school income shrinks then do we increase class sizes, reduce intervention services, narrow the curriculum or a mixture of all three? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> ① Ensure our new building significantly advances the facilities and opportunities at the school for the 21st century. ② Increase the volume of basic facilities like toilets and changing rooms to accommodate the growing number of students and the need for first class facilities for all. ③ Create brand new public performance spaces that promote performing arts both as an extra-curricular and enrichment activity, but also as a central curricular offer.