

The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	111756
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	378352
Inspection dates	24–25 January 2012
Lead inspector	Joan Hewitt HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
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	1,665
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maria Mekins
Headteacher	Michael Lee
Date of previous school inspection	18 March 2009
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Introduction

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed 28 teachers in 30 lessons and also conducted brief lesson visits. One inspector observed a small group of students working on their reading. Meetings were held with groups of staff, students and the Chair of the Governing Body. One inspector had a telephone conversation with the School Improvement Partner.

Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's development plan, students' work, data regarding students' achievement, policy documents, the school's monitoring records and the minutes of the governing body meetings. They considered the responses to questionnaires from 871 parents and carers, 188 students and 127 members of staff.

Information about the school

The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College is larger than the average-sized secondary school. The large majority of students are Roman Catholics. Most students are of White British heritage although many other ethnic groups are represented. A few students speak English as an additional language and of these a small minority are at the early stages of acquiring the language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The proportion of students identified as having disabilities and those with special educational needs is above average. The number of students with a statement of special educational needs is average. The school meets the current floor standard (the minimum levels of expected achievement). It was designated as a specialist arts college in September 2000 and redesignated in July 2009. It gained the International School's Award in 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall Effectiveness	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key Findings

- This is a good school. It is rapidly improving because of the good work leaders and managers have put in place to raise attainment and rates of progress. Leaders accurately evaluate the work of the school with unflinching candour.
- Achievement is good overall and for many groups of students. English was an area requiring improvement in the previous inspection. The school has been markedly successful in addressing this so that English is an area where achievement is particularly strong. There remains some unevenness in the achievement of different groups of students and in a few subjects. For example, students whom the school has identified as needing extra support in class do not always make as much progress as others, while students with disabilities make good progress.
- The sixth form is also good. The progress students make from their starting points is good and often outstanding. This is because teachers take a dynamic approach and have high expectations of students.
- Teaching is improving rapidly and there is a strong body of good and better teaching. The best teaching is characterised by teachers ensuring the needs of individual and groups of students are well met. However, this is not consistent and teachers do not always tailor tasks to meet the needs of students, particularly those with special educational needs.
- Students' behaviour is good and students feel very safe. It is often exemplary around the school and in the dining hall. In lessons, behaviour is routinely compliant and attitudes to learning are good.
- Leadership and management are good. The Catholic ethos, combined with the impact of the specialist and international school status, has resulted in students' outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There have been

marked improvements in the progress students make, in behaviour and attendance and particularly in the quality of teaching.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Iron out the remaining inconsistencies in the progress made by different groups of students and across different subjects by:
 - extending the effective tracking of students' progress in Key Stage 4 to include those in Key Stage 3
 - ensuring all teachers offer a consistently high level of challenge for all students.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching by:
 - developing teachers' skills to meet the precise needs of individual students, especially those with special educational needs.
 - ensuring teachers offer consistent opportunities for students to develop excellent independent learning skills
 - building on existing excellent practice to ensure marking is of a consistently high quality
 - improving the effectiveness of teaching assistants in supporting learning.

Main Report

Achievement of pupils

Students' performance at GCSE, including English and mathematics, improved markedly last year following a significant dip in results in 2010. Students' attainment is above the national average and the school's robust data demonstrate improvements are set to continue. Students' performance in most subjects is good but there are a few areas, for example, in science, where improvements have been more modest. However, this is improving steadily and currently rates of progress in these subjects are accelerating. Most groups of students make good progress but there remains some unevenness. For example, students who speak English as an additional language make good and sometimes better progress, while some students with special educational needs do not make as much progress as they should. However, these gaps are narrowing quickly.

Students in the sixth form make good and often outstanding progress. There is some variability between different subjects but the school is taking robust steps to ensure consistency. Students enjoy their time in the sixth form and this is reflected in the high numbers who stay on to complete two years of study and in the high quality of their destinations.

In the main school, students have good attitudes to learning, especially when teaching fosters independence and students are able to investigate in pairs and groups. They complete their work diligently. They take care with their writing and make sure they check the spelling of specialist vocabulary in different subjects.

Teachers' questions are met with keenness and curiosity. Most students and their parents and carers agree that they are making good progress and learning a lot in lessons. Very few parents and carers raised concerns about the progress students make but those who did commented on the level of challenge for the most and least able. The school has identified this as an area needing improvement.

The school captures assessment information regularly and accurately in Key Stage 4. This has enabled leaders to take effective action to tackle underachievement. Plans to extend this robust system to Key Stage 3 are not fully implemented. The heads of house ensure the progress of individuals and groups of students is considered along with their pastoral needs. This detailed work helps the school to plan effective interventions; for example, a group of Key Stage 3 students made good progress in improving their reading after attending 'reading recovery' sessions.

Quality of teaching

Good quality teaching is based on the teachers' very good subject knowledge and the strong relationships they have with their students. Teachers routinely plan interesting and varied tasks for students which capture their imagination. Learning moves at a good pace because students are motivated and engaged. For example, in a performing arts lesson, Year 12 students were engrossed in applying their knowledge of physical theatre. As a result of their high levels of interest they made good progress. Teachers make increasingly effective use of assessment data to provide challenging tasks. Occasionally, this is not consistent and there are times when teachers' expectations of students are not high enough to challenge more-able students. There are examples of outstanding teaching where teachers promote independent learning and students are expected to sustain high levels of concentration over extended periods of time. For example, in an art lesson, Year 10 students analysed artists' work and independently assessed their own work against clear criteria. Opportunities for students to demonstrate these high levels of self-discipline and independent enquiry are not consistent across the school.

Teachers offer students clear explanations and questions are frequently skilful and probing. The emphasis teachers have given to improving students' reading and writing across different areas of the curriculum has been very successful. Consequently, students have confident communication skills. Teachers identify students who need specific support but they do not always meet these needs. Progress then slows for these students. Teachers value the work of teaching assistants and students are also appreciative of their work. However, this valuable resource is not consistently used effectively.

The good teaching entuses students and this can be seen clearly in the careful homework students produce. Students value the regular marking of their work. There are examples of excellent practice where teachers maintain a written dialogue with students. In these examples, students' progress accelerates rapidly.

Parents and carers and students are strongly appreciative of the quality of teaching. They also acknowledge the good work the school has done to improve the quality of teaching since the previous inspection.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Students are unequivocal in expressing how safe they feel in school. Parents and carers who responded to Ofsted's survey were almost unanimous in saying their child felt safe. The curriculum and the moral guidance students receive are highly effective in helping them to understand risks and how to keep themselves safe. Students' attendance is consistently above the national average. The school has had marked success in reducing the number of students who struggle to attend school regularly.

Behaviour around the school is excellent. Students are courteous and respectful. They care about each other and speak warmly about the relationships they have with their teachers and other adults. Sixth-form students are excellent role models for those in the main school. Students are clear that staff will respond swiftly and effectively to any incidents of bullying. Consequently there are few incidents of bullying. The school tracks this and other aspects of behaviour very well. Students have a clear understanding of their responsibility to take action or seek help if they encounter any misbehaviour or bullying.

Fixed-term exclusions and the occasions senior staff are called to deal with disruption have been reduced to levels below those found nationally. Behaviour in lessons is good but students do not routinely have the opportunity to demonstrate high levels of self-discipline. The large majority of students and their parents and carers say that behaviour is good. Very few parents and carers raised concerns about behaviour but those who did express concerns pointed to occasional disruption in lessons. Infrequently, where teachers do not adopt effective classroom management strategies, students are disruptive and this slows learning.

The school is effective in supporting students with identified behaviour difficulties. This includes tailored intervention for students by the heads of houses.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, supported capably by senior and middle leaders, has formed an effective team in driving improvements. They have been conspicuously successful in improving students' achievement, the quality of teaching and students' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A clear example of this effective work was the robust action the school took to raise standards rapidly when faced with disappointing results in 2010.

There is a robust system to manage the performance of teachers which links clearly to training and coaching opportunities. As a result of this careful work, teaching continues to improve. The school takes effective steps to eliminate the rare occasions when teaching is inadequate. The effectiveness of the school's work in ensuring the small core of satisfactory teaching improves is gathering pace. Teachers feel well supported and say their professional development is of a high quality. They have good opportunities to share effective practice and learn from each other. Consequently, morale is high and staff say they are proud to belong to the school.

The school provides a good curriculum which effectively meets the needs of students and prepares them well for their next steps in education, employment and training. The school offers students an excellent range of clubs and other after-school opportunities. The school's specialist status has had an impressive impact on the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students respond readily to frequent opportunities for reflection and taking action to improve the lives of others. This is further supported by the work the school does as part of its international school status. For example it has close links with Gambia, raising money to provide schools with bicycles and through exchange links. Staff, students and the governing body attend retreats together which consolidates an ethos of tolerance and harmony.

Leaders and managers know the school's strengths and they are equally aware of areas which need to improve. They have developed effective monitoring systems which involve middle as well as senior leaders. Middle leaders are developing increasingly effective evaluative skills. Some are highly skilled but this is not fully consistent. The gaps between the progress made by different groups of students and across a few subject areas are reducing and the work to promote equality in achievements is good. The governing body also plays a valuable role in checking on the quality of the school's work. Arrangements to ensure students and staff are safe are robust. The improvements in students' achievement and in the quality of teaching coupled with the accurate self-evaluation demonstrate the school's effective capacity to sustain these improvements.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 January 2012

Dear Students

**Inspection of The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College,
Hartlepool TS25 4HA**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave to me and the other inspectors when we visited your school recently. We found talking to you, watching you learn and looking at your work very helpful. We also valued reading what you had to say in the survey some of you completed for us. I am delighted to report The English Martyrs and Sixth Form College is a good school.

Your achievement is good overall and it is particularly strong in English and in the sixth form. Most of you make good progress because of the good quality teaching. Your behaviour around the school is good overall and excellent during breaks and lunchtime. We were particularly impressed with your behaviour in the dining hall. Those of you in the sixth form are excellent role models for those in other years. You told us behaviour is good in school and that you feel very safe.

The school's specialist arts status and international status are supporting your excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. You take your responsibilities as global citizens very seriously and take steps to improve the lives of others through your actions. For example, you have raised money to provide bicycles for schools in Gambia.

One of the reasons why your school is good is that leaders and managers keep a close eye on your progress and the quality of teaching. They take effective steps to improve things quickly.

All the staff want the school to be even better and we have asked them to do the following things.

- Teachers should make sure that everyone makes good or better progress in all subjects, for example by tracking your progress better in Key Stage 3 and giving you work that is more challenging.
- Managers should increase the amount of good and outstanding teaching in school, for example by making sure teachers give you work that is exactly right for each one of you and provide plenty of opportunities to develop your independent learning skills.

You can help the school to continue to improve by continuing to work hard and making sure your behaviour in lessons is always excellent.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Her Majesty's Inspector

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