

St Cuthbert's Catholic High School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108535
Local authority	Newcastle Upon Tyne
Inspection number	377772
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Lee Northern 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	Boys
Gender of pupils in the sixth form	Boys
Number of pupils on the school roll	1,112
Of which number on roll in the sixth form	220
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	MJ Mc-Dade
Headteacher	JG Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	31 January 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors. Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 38 lessons, each taught by a different member of staff. Of these, two were observed jointly with a member of staff from the school. Two 'learning walks', consisting of short visits to a series of lessons or small-group sessions, were conducted with senior leaders from the school. Inspectors held meetings with groups of students, members of the governing body and school staff. They observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documentation and examined evaluations undertaken by the school to ensure that it meets statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding. In addition, 123 questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised and inspectors also examined questionnaires returned by staff and those from a representative sample of students.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of provision in promoting achievement in English and mathematics for all groups of students.
- The effectiveness of the use of assessment information to ensure provision meets the needs of all groups of students, particularly in ensuring that the most-able students are challenged to reach the highest grades, including in the sixth form.
- The extent to which leaders and managers at all levels, including the governing body and in the sixth form, are highly effective in securing improvements to provision and outcomes, and are demonstrating an 'outstanding' capacity to improve further, as the school asserts.
- The extent to which evidence supports personal development outcomes judged by the school as good or outstanding.

Information about the school

St Cuthbert's Catholic High School is a larger-than-average boys' secondary school located in the west end of Newcastle upon Tyne. Students attending the school come predominantly from the local area and although the very large majority are of White British heritage, a number of different minority-ethnic groups are also represented. Around one-fifth of students speak English as an additional language. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. There is a smaller proportion of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities than is found nationally, although broadly average numbers of students have a statement of special educational needs. The school has held specialist status for science since 2003 and was awarded a second specialism of languages in 2007. It also holds Healthy School status and is a Leading Edge school.

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: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a good school where students achieve well. Its work in providing for students in the sixth form is outstanding. Underpinned by the school's Catholic ethos, its rich tradition and longstanding values, the well-being of students as individuals is of paramount importance. As a result the quality of care, guidance and support is also outstanding. This is seen in the good progress made by students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and by those who speak English as an additional language. Attendance is high and exclusion from school is now very rarely used as a sanction. The quality of information, advice and guidance for students to help them make choices at all stages of their education is exemplary.

Levels of attainment, in all key stages, are above average overall. From broadly average levels of attainment on entry to the school, students make good progress across a range of subject areas. They achieve well in the specialist subjects of modern foreign languages and science, in English, religious education, art and design and on vocational courses. Although the progress made by the more-able students is improving, there are inconsistencies between subjects. This is because not all teachers use assessment information well to plan lessons that meet the needs of all groups of students in the class. In the best lessons, students are more actively involved in their learning and are able to demonstrate clearly what they know and understand. In less effective teaching, students listen for too long or work for extended periods on tasks or activities that do not sustain their interest or involvement well. As a result, the pace of learning slows and opportunities to address errors or misconceptions, or to identify where learning can be moved on rapidly for the more-able students, are missed.

Leaders and managers at the school demonstrate good capacity to improve. Self-evaluation is accurate and development planning identifies an appropriate range of improvement priorities. The headteacher and the senior team have established a culture of improvement and have raised expectations and aspirations. The school is highly effective at overcoming barriers to improvement and it has improved many aspects of its work since the time of the previous inspection. For example, the regular and accurate tracking of students' progress is very effective in identifying where intervention and support is needed to prevent underachievement. Leaders and managers at all levels are strongly committed to improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning does not place sufficient emphasis on students' learning and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the use of assessment to support learning and thereby further raise achievement by:
 - ensuring all teachers use assessment information to inform planning so that teaching consistently meets the needs of all groups of students in the class, including the most-able
 - increasing the opportunities for students to be more actively involved in lessons so that teachers are more able to assess learning and provide additional challenge or support as needed.

- Improve the rigour with which leaders and managers evaluate teaching and learning by placing a greater emphasis in all monitoring activities on the quality of students' learning and progress.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Students enjoy their lessons, show good attitudes and are keen to do well. They appreciate the opportunities to work collaboratively in pairs or in small groups. They contribute well to class discussions or when asked to share their opinions or ideas. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language, make good progress in line with that of their peers. However, they make better progress in response to additional, targeted support than they do in lessons, where the use of assessment information is not consistently effective in ensuring that activities are sufficiently well-adapted to meet their needs. Students are very courteous and welcoming to visitors and their good behaviour in lessons and around the school makes a positive contribution to school life. Their conduct when representing the school on trips and visits is very highly regarded. However, in a very small number of lessons, the behaviour of some students does disturb learning. These instances are linked to weaknesses in the quality of teaching or where the school's code for managing behaviour is not utilised effectively by staff.

Students say they feel safe in school and they are very confident that any issues they raise will be promptly and effectively dealt with by staff. The promotion of healthy lifestyles is good and students report that the opportunities for them to access enrichment and sporting activities are many, varied and popular. Attendance is high and punctuality is good. The good support for students' basic skills, including the use of information and communication technology, ensures that they are well prepared for their future lives. The number of students who leave school who do not proceed to education, employment or training is very small. The promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is a strong feature of the work of the school. A good example of this is the way in which students' work in art and design is celebrated throughout the school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The curriculum makes a strong contribution to good outcomes and provides more effectively for a range of students' needs than at the time of the previous inspection. For example, in the specialist subjects of science and modern foreign languages, students achieve well because the curriculum ensures that different groups of students are enabled to follow courses and programmes appropriate to their needs and aspirations. As a result the proportions of students who follow science and languages courses in the sixth form or after they leave school is high.

The quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. Arrangements to support the transition of younger students from primary schools are highly effective. The comment, 'My son had no anxieties before starting – he has been exceptionally well cared for with high standards of support from staff.' was typical of the views expressed by many parents and carers. The school works very effectively with a wide range of external agencies and other partners to provide support for all groups of students, particularly those whose circumstances might make them vulnerable.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. However, there is variation in the extent to which the use of assessment to support learning is consistently effective in meeting the needs of all groups of students, including the most-able. In the best lessons, teaching is highly responsive to the learning and progress of all students in the class. For example, in a particularly effective activity for Year 10 students in mathematics, the teacher skilfully drew on a wide range of responses from students in order to reshape or adapt learning as the activity progressed. As a result students made rapid progress in their learning because the focus of the activity was on developing and assessing their understanding of the underlying skills and concepts.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

¹The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and managers provide a clear vision and drive for improvement. Lines of accountability have been clarified and strengthened and leaders at all levels are now held more routinely and rigorously to account for outcomes. The school is highly ambitious for all its students and works effectively to reduce differences in achievement and participation, and to promote equal opportunities. The tracking of students' progress, underpinned by challenging targets, is highly effective in identifying and addressing potential underachievement. As a result the differences in attainment between all students and those known to be eligible for free school meals are small and are reducing. However, there is variation in the progress made by the more-able students across different subject areas because not all teaching is consistently effective in meeting their needs well.

The effectiveness of the governing body is good; it meets its statutory duties well and brings a broad range of expertise in support of the school. It has an increasingly accurate perspective on the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the role of the link governor is providing valued support for subject departments. Safeguarding arrangements, including through partnerships with external agencies, are good and procedures to assure students' welfare at all times, including on trips and visits, are thorough. The school is a cohesive community where students from different backgrounds and communities get on noticeably well with each other. The work of the school to engage with parents and carers is particularly well seen in activities promoted through the specialist subjects. For example, the school provides workshops in science and languages for parents and carers to learn alongside their children. These have proved popular and are well supported.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Sixth form

This is an outstanding sixth form which has improved since the time of the previous inspection. The school's inclusive approach means that although some students enter the sixth form with below average standards, they reach above average levels of attainment across a range of courses. The sixth form provides exceptionally well for all students and, as a result, they make at least good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. The best teaching is inspiring and stimulating and is highly effective in promoting students' independent learning skills and in encouraging them to take responsibility for their own learning. As a result, they are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, employment or training.

Overall, the students' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy school, behave in an exemplary manner and make a very strong contribution to the school and wider community. They act as excellent role models and provide good support for younger students. Students value the outstanding care and guidance they receive, especially the way in which the school monitors closely their welfare and progress. Support with the university application process and transition arrangements to higher education are exemplary.

The leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. The development of a range of partnerships is highly effective in widening and enriching the opportunities for students. Leaders have a clear vision, a commitment to continual improvement and are responsive to the needs of students who, in return, feel valued and respected.

These are the grades for the sixth form

Overall effectiveness of the sixth Form	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for students in the sixth form	1
The quality of provision in the sixth form	1
Leadership and management of the sixth form	1

Views of parents and carers

The proportion of questionnaire responses received from parents and carers was slightly lower than that normally seen for secondary schools. The overwhelming majority of parents and carers who returned the questionnaire were very pleased with their child's experience at the school, and feel the school promotes safety and enjoyment very well. While a very large majority of parents and carers feel the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns, a small number expressed the view in their written comments to inspectors that more could be done to improve the quality and timeliness of communications from school to home.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Cuthbert's Catholic High School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 123 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 1,112 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	51	41	68	55	1	1	3	2
The school keeps my child safe	56	46	65	53	2	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	49	40	69	56	4	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	48	56	46	5	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	68	55	50	41	4	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	41	33	71	58	8	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	33	73	59	8	7	1	1
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	53	43	61	50	2	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	48	39	69	56	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	37	67	54	7	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	36	29	72	59	8	7	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	56	46	63	51	3	2	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	64	52	58	47	1	1	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and 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.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on 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 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:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

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.



18 November 2011

Dear Students

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic High School, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE15 7PX

You will remember that a team of inspectors visited your school recently. We took careful note of the views that you expressed in our meetings with you and in the questionnaires that you completed for us.

We judged that your school is a good school where students achieve well and where the sixth form provides an outstanding standard of education. In your meetings with us, you said that you greatly valued the caring and safe atmosphere that the school provides. We also found that the school promotes these aspects very well.

The attainment of students in all key stages is above average. Students make good progress in a range of subjects, including in English, art and design, science, modern foreign languages, religious education and on vocational programmes. You told us you enjoy opportunities in lessons to be more actively involved in your learning and in working together in pairs or in small groups. However, you also told us that not all teaching is like this. Inspectors found that, in some lessons, you have fewer opportunities to contribute your ideas or to demonstrate clearly what you know and understand.

We have therefore asked school leaders and managers, and the governing body, to ensure that all teachers use assessment information to match lessons more closely to the needs of students, including the most-able. We have also asked that the school looks more closely at the quality of your learning and progress when it reviews the effectiveness of its work.

You can play your part in improving St Cuthbert's Catholic High School by continuing to attend regularly, behaving well and working hard. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Lee Northern
Her Majesty's Inspector

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