

St Cuthbert's Catholic Community College for Business and Enterprise

Berrys Lane, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3HE

Inspection dates

13–14 December 2012

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although achievement is improving, it is not yet good. The progress made by some groups of students, such as those supported by school action and particularly in English and mathematics, is not rapid enough.
- Although teaching is improving rapidly, there is still a small minority of teaching that is not good enough to enable students to make or exceed expected progress. In some lessons teachers set work that does not always help students to learn well and achieve their targets.
- Teachers do not always check how well students are learning and use the information to inform their planning.
- Although attendance has improved over the last three years, it is still below the national average.
- Senior leaders and the governing body do not make full use of the evaluation of the college's work and planning for improvement to ensure rapid improvement.
- Subject leaders and pastoral leaders do not take a sufficiently active role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the progress made by students.

The school has the following strengths

- Students' behaviour and their attitudes to learning are good. They are polite and well-mannered to each other and to visitors.
- Every student is equally valued and is extremely well cared for through the college's effective pastoral care systems. Students say they feel safe in college. This view is supported by the vast majority of parents.
- The courses and opportunities provided contribute well to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The college's senior leaders and governing body supported by the local authority, work well together and demonstrate a commitment and determination to raise standards and improve the quality of education students receive.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 41 lessons of which three were jointly observed with members of the college improvement team.
- The inspectors held meetings with staff, four groups of students, four members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. There was a telephone conversation with the college's improvement partner.
- Inspectors observed the college's work, including documents relating to behaviour and safeguarding, the college's analysis of how well it is doing and its improvement plan, minutes of the meetings of the governing body, the college's data on students' progress and their work.
- The inspectors took account of the 39 responses from parents in the online questionnaire (Parent View), together with the 134 responses to the Ofsted parent questionnaire returned during the inspection. The inspectors also took account of the 69 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Alan Parkinson, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Bimla Kumari

Additional Inspector

Osama Abdul Rahim

Additional Inspector

Michael McLachlan

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's is an average-sized secondary school.
- The proportion of students known to be eligible for the pupil premium is well above the national average. The pupil premium is the additional funding based on the number of students in local authority care, from service families and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportions of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average.
- The proportion of students who are disabled and those who have special educational needs supported at the level known as school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also well above the national average.
- The college meets the current government floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected for attainment and progress.
- The college uses the St Helens Pupil Referral Unit and St Helen's College to provide alternative provision for some students. It also uses Instant Training and Aspire which are privately run organisations that offer alternative provision for some students.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the achievement of students further by:
 - increasing the proportion of students making or exceeding expected progress in all subjects, but particularly in English and mathematics, and especially for those entering the school with lower starting points
 - improving the attendance of some students to bring it at least in line with the national average.
- Raise the proportion of teaching that is consistently good or better across all subjects by:
 - further developing teaching strategies that challenge students more effectively and meet the needs of all students so that they achieve their targets
 - ensuring that assessment of students' progress informs the planning of lessons to enable students to make more rapid progress.
- Improve leadership and management so that the college continues to improve at a good rate by:
 - ensuring that the recently improved systems for tracking pupils' progress are used effectively to accelerate their progress
 - further developing the role of subject leaders and pastoral leaders to enable them to make a more effective contribution to college improvement and raising achievement through monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and students' progress
 - increasing the rigour and precision of evaluation of the college's work and planning for improvement to enable further rapid improvement.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Although the attainment of students is below the national average, it has improved since the previous inspection. The gap between students' attainment and national averages is closing quickly, particularly for the more able students.
- Students' achievement in lessons is good. They are keen to learn and work well on their own and with others. Work in students' books confirms that they are now achieving better than they were in the past.
- Some good and outstanding teaching is improving students' progress, particularly in mathematics for the more able students and those supported through school action plus. However, lower-ability students do not always make sufficient progress. The proportion of students making more than expected progress, particularly in English and mathematics, while improving, is still lower than the national average.
- Since the previous inspection the college has been proactive in developing students' literacy and numeracy skills. For example, the introduction of a new reading initiative throughout the college has had a very positive impact, particularly in raising the reading age of a significant number of Year 7 students.
- Disabled students and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action plus make good progress. However, from the end of Year 10 to the end of the first term in Year 11 those students supported through school action have shown no significant improvement. Through the college's new tracking system to monitor attainment and progress, these students have been identified and action is being taken to raise their achievement.
- The attainment of students eligible for the pupil premium funding is rising and the gap between their attainment and that of all other students is closing quickly in both English and mathematics. This is because the funding is well spent on additional staffing and activities such as one-to-one or small-group work to develop literacy and numeracy skills and provide support to those students at risk of falling behind.
- The students following courses in establishments away from the college site achieve well and receive good support through their key worker and teaching assistants. Their attendance at the off-site provision is closely monitored and is good.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching overall requires improvement because not enough is consistently good or better. However, teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection and teaching in a few lessons is outstanding.
- The relationships between students and between students and adults are very good. Many opportunities are provided for students to work well together, to share and develop ideas and review each other's work. This helps to make learning enjoyable and effective. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and their enthusiasm motivates students to achieve well.
- In the best lessons students are fully engaged in their learning, show interest and are given appropriate opportunities to develop as independent learners. For example, in a Year 7 drama lesson, where students were working enthusiastically to write a news report about a bullying incident, the involvement of the community police officer helped to create the atmosphere and bring the story to life.
- Some lessons do not challenge students sufficiently. In a small minority of lessons teachers do not identify quickly enough where learning is too slow and do not plan their work well enough to get the best out of some students. As a result, they do not set work that helps students to learn quickly, whatever their ability, and achieve their targets well.
- Students have many opportunities to develop their creative skills. For example, in a Year 7

English lesson students were writing a poem about anti-smoking and read it out to the class, helping to develop their communication and speaking skills.

- Students say that they enjoy their lessons, know how well they are doing and get good support from their teachers. Students' work is well marked and in the best examples provides clear feedback to students on what they need to do to improve.
- Teaching assistants are used well in lessons, particularly to support disabled students and those who have special educational needs. They help students to learn, develop skills and achieve well.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Students are polite and courteous to each other, staff and visitors. Students report that they feel very safe in college. They have a clear understanding of the different forms of bullying and report that bullying is rare. When any instances of bullying do occur they are quickly resolved.
- The college's strong pastoral care system is valued by students. The effective partnerships with parents and external support agencies enable effective support to be given to deal with any problems that students might have, including those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This contributes well to the college's caring ethos and students' positive attitudes to learning and shows the college's commitment to offering all its students equal opportunities to be successful.
- The responses to the parental survey indicated that a very large majority of parents support the views that students behave well in college, they are not bullied, they are well cared for and they feel safe at college.
- The college's Christian ethos, school assemblies and guidance all contribute well to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The college provides opportunities for students to develop as responsible individuals by taking on positions of responsibility such as membership of the college council or as house captains. This enables them to make a significant contribution to the college community and local community. For example, the college students raise funds to support many charities, are involved in a local allotment project and have been involved in the recently completed refurbishment of the college canteen.
- Attendance remains below the national average but has improved throughout the last three years as a result of effective actions taken by the college. The percentage of students who are persistently absent is too high, but the college is addressing this through formal attendance panels and home visits.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The college's senior leaders are well supported and challenged by the governing body. They have accurately identified the strengths of the college and what the college needs to do to improve further. The college's main priority is to raise students' attainment further, particularly in English and mathematics, by improving the quality of teaching. Although the college improvement plan sets out the action points for improvement, it does not clearly show how these will be attended to or who will be responsible for them. Consequently, although some changes are showing a positive impact on teaching and students' progress, the plans do not ensure that improvement will be fast enough.
 - The college's systems for observing lessons and monitoring the quality of teaching are good and provide teachers with accurate feedback on their performance. This information is used well to provide a relevant programme of staff training and to advise the governing body about teachers' pay awards. However, the college does not use subject leaders and pastoral leaders well enough to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and students' progress.
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- The courses and opportunities offered meet the interests of students well. They help them to develop their academic and social skills and prepare them well for the next stage of their education, training or employment. For example, students attending work placements value the opportunities given to them and show a very mature attitude to work.
 - College assemblies promote students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, during a thoughtful and interesting assembly about Advent two students read from the Bible linking to preparations for Christmas. Students were encouraged to get involved in charity work such as Operation Christmas Child and Cancer Research.
 - Since the previous inspection the college has received very effective and valuable support from the local authority. This has included intensive support and advice to senior leaders and the governing body. The local authority has assisted with areas identified for improvement, especially the improvement of teaching and the raising of achievement in English and mathematics.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body knows the college well and provides effective support and challenge to the college's senior leaders. However, governors do not monitor and evaluate the use improvement planning to ensure that action is taken to raise standards quickly enough. They have a good understanding of the college's finances including the allocation of pupil premium funding to provide one-to-one support and a range of activities and opportunities to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of those students at risk of falling behind. Governors use performance management to set appropriate and challenging targets. They give appropriate attention to the connection between the quality of work that staff do and the arrangements for pay. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet statutory requirements.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104835
Local authority	St Helens
Inspection number	399644

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	874
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Swanson
Headteacher	Monica Gallimore
Date of previous school inspection	14 September 2011
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