

St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

King Oswy Drive, West View, Hartlepool, TS24 9PB

Inspection dates

6–7 February 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	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.

- GCSE results have been well below average for some time. Although they improved considerably in 2012, too few students achieved grade A*/A.
- The rate of progress students make is better than it was when the school was last inspected but it is still not good. In particular, the most-able students and students who have special educational needs do not make as much progress as similar groups do in other schools.
- Some of the teaching is a little dull and uninspiring. At times it is not matched well to students' abilities or needs.
- Some staff in charge of subjects and different aspects of the school's work are not as effective in their role as others are.

The school has the following strengths

- The hard work of senior leaders and governors has resulted in considerable improvements in the past two years. These include better examination results, better teaching and better use of assessment of students' work.
- Students' behaviour is good. They are attentive in lessons and work hard. They behave sensibly around the building at all times.
- Students feel safe and well cared for.
- Teaching in some subjects, such as history, geography, religious education and engineering, is very good. In these subjects students make good progress and get good examination results.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 37 lessons. These included four joint observations with the headteacher and members of the senior leadership team.
- Inspectors held meetings with four groups of students; with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors; with school staff, including senior and middle managers; and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents including the school's self-evaluation summary, development plan and assessment information.
- They analysed 31 responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 70 questionnaires returned by school staff.

Inspection team

Derek Neil, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Julie Rimmer	Additional Inspector
Mark Simpson	Additional Inspector
David Griffiths	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School is slightly smaller than most secondary schools.
- Most students are White British. The proportions of students from minority ethnic groups and of those who speak English as an additional language are small.
- A high proportion of the students are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and students known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of students identified with special educational needs through school action is high.
- The proportion of students supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average.
- A small number of students receive all or part of their education with alternative providers. These are: Holy Trinity Church Hall, the West View Project, Owton Fens Community Association, the National Centre for the Resettlement of Offenders, and the Catcote School-Business and Enterprise College.
- St Hild's has been a specialist school for engineering since 2004.
- It meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching by:
 - making more lessons exciting and enjoyable
 - ensuring that work is always at the right level of difficulty and takes account of what students already know and understand
 - giving students the skills and the opportunities to work and learn independently.
- Improve students' achievement by:
 - concentrating more on the progress made by the most-able and those who have special educational needs
 - developing students' oral communication skills
 - building on current work to develop students' literacy, particularly their enthusiasm for reading and their spelling.
- Improve leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of all leaders in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility and in planning for improvement
 - making better use of data about the school's performance to evaluate the effectiveness of different initiatives.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Until recently, examination results were below average. Students here made far less progress than students managed in other schools. In 2012 there was a considerable improvement in the results and in the rate at which students had made progress. The school's data, now more reliable than at the time of previous inspections, and evidence gathered on this inspection indicate that this improvement is the start of a sustainable trend.
- Results in some subjects, such as history and geography, are consistently very good. Results in English and mathematics have risen to be very close to the national average. However, overall attainment and students' rate of progress are still some way short of average. Not enough students get A*/A grades. The most-able students and those with special educational needs do not make the progress of which they are capable because work in class is not always pitched at the right level.
- Because of the school's imaginative use of the pupil premium funding, those students for whom it was intended made huge improvements in 2012. For example, they increased their point scores in English and mathematics by a far greater margin than their peers did. However, they still not do as well as similar students in other schools.
- In most lessons, students are attentive and set about their work with determination. In classes where the teacher devises interesting and demanding activities they make good progress. In a minority of lessons students are held back because the work is not pitched at the right level or because it does not capture or hold their interest.
- Students' progress is impeded because of their weak communication skills. Orally, they lack confidence and find it difficult to express themselves. Many dislike books and do not read much. For too many students, poor spelling undermines their written work. Although intensive sessions are helping a small number of the least-able students to develop their literacy skills, the weakness is more widespread.
- Students, especially boys, are also held back by their lack of ambition and self-belief. The school is tackling this vigorously and with increasing effect. In a lively session with Year 9 boys, when the inspirational outside speaker asked, 'How many of you want have an amazing life?' they all raised their hand. His next question, 'How many of you are working hard enough to achieve it?' received the opposite response. An observing teacher commented, 'You could hear the penny drop.'
- Students who attend alternative provision are given individual programmes based on their needs, and this has succeeded in keeping them in full-time education. However, the school is unable to produce convincing evidence to demonstrate how well these students achieve.
- A carefully selected group of students is entered for GCSE mathematics before the end of Year 11. The practice of then re-entering them at the usual time has enabled several to improve their grades and has contributed to the better results in the subject.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and now has some significant strengths.
- Relationships are very good. Teachers use praise and encouragement effectively to bolster students' confidence and self-belief.
- Lessons are well-planned. Teachers make it clear what students are to learn, usually in language that is at the right level for the class.
- Lessons are well-structured. A variety of activities is sequenced to enable students to make progress step by step as the lesson proceeds. For example, in a well-organised Year 11 science lesson, students worked at a good pace through a series of tests on acids and alkalis.
- Teachers use a good range of high-quality resources, often on the interactive white board. For

example a video clip from 'The Apprentice' held students' attention as they considered the vocabulary used in a boardroom power struggle.

- Marking is good. Teachers do this regularly for each class. They highlight strengths and indicate how work could be improved. Students are encouraged to consider this guidance and to act upon it. For example, in English they sometimes redraft a piece of writing in the light of the teachers' comments. Some staff point out spelling and grammatical errors. Although some mark work more effectively than others, there is a fair degree of consistency in the way staff apply the school's policy.
- Some lessons are outstanding. In these, students are involved in practical activities; there is a high level of challenge which the students rise to; and all students are fascinated by the content. For example, in an engineering lesson students were riveted by the process of investigating the hardness and strength of different metals and other materials.
- In some lessons, work is not at the right level and is either too hard or too easy for some students. The most-able are not challenged enough. The teachers' questions are often designed to elicit simple one-word answers and rarely expect students to think deeply or to express difficult ideas. The least-able do not make good progress because they get too much help or the work is too difficult for them to understand. On occasion, the content is a little dull. For example, some English lessons focus uninspiringly on the identification of literary devices without getting students to enjoy reading texts or writing their own.
- Teachers have responded to the previous inspection report by giving students opportunities to learn independently. This needs further development. For example, some teachers talk too much and do not involve students in practical activities. In some lessons the teacher provides too much help for the students; in one, the teacher spelled an unfamiliar word for a student without encouraging him first to try for himself or to use a dictionary. In other lessons the teacher plans too many activities and does not allow students enough time to complete them or to reflect on what they have learned.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- Students respond well to the well-designed systems for rewarding good behaviour and penalising bad behaviour. Although some of the older students resent the new regime of rules, which they regard as too strict, the younger students readily accept them and understand the reason for them.
- Students feel very safe in school and well cared for. They are supervised well at break and lunchtime. Bullying and racial abuse are rare; students are confident that when they arise the staff deal with them in the right way.
- Attendance fluctuates but is broadly average. Staff have worked effectively to reduce the number of students who miss a lot of schooling. However, attendance declined appreciably in the autumn term of 2012.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The ambitious vision of the headteacher to make this a good and, in time, an outstanding school is clear. Staff understand what is expected of them and are committed to the task ahead of them. The recent improvements indicate that the school is well on the way to reaching these goals.
- The improvements mostly date from a visit by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in the summer of 2011. Governors and the local authority have provided effective support for the school since that visit. Everyone recognises they were initially too slow to make progress after the previous full inspection.
- Although the school's self-evaluation and planning for improvement are better than they were,

there are still shortcomings. Its assessment of the quality of teaching is still overgenerous. The way some subject leaders monitor their areas of responsibility lacks rigour. Planning rightly focuses on improving students' achievement, but the plans of different managers vary in quality.

- Much has been done to improve teaching and this is reflected in better examination results. Performance management arrangements and new staff appointments have played their part in this. The previous inspection's recommendation to share good practice has been followed up informally. Leaders recognise that a more systematic approach is needed to exploit the talent available in school. For example, the strengths in the engineering specialism are intended to support teaching in other subjects, although in reality their influence is limited.
- Leaders now collect more reliable data about students and use these effectively to improve achievement. Staff set students ambitious targets and regularly monitor their progress towards them. However, leaders do not analyse data to assess how well different initiatives are working. For example, staff have not formally evaluated the impact of new approaches to improving students' reading skills or the effectiveness of the new literacy policy.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity and combats discrimination and prejudice vigorously. Leaders recognise the need to improve boys' achievement by raising their aspirations and are making a concerted effort to tackle this.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are more effective than at the time of the previous inspection. They have undertaken suitable training to give themselves skills in interpreting examination results, for example, and are now more able to challenge as well as to support the school. They receive regular reports about the quality of teaching, and contribute to decisions about pay increases for staff. They now appreciate how poor the school's results have been in the past and understand their responsibility in monitoring its performance more closely.

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	133293
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	402566

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	792
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Reverend Kate Brooke
Headteacher	Colin Reid
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2010
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