

# St Cuthbert's Catholic Community College for Business and Enterprise

Berrys Lane, St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3HE

**Inspection dates** 17–18 June 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	<b>Requires improvement</b>	<b>3</b>
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Students do not achieve consistently well in all of their subjects. In 2013 students' progress was inadequate in both English and mathematics.
- Although teaching has improved rapidly since the previous inspection it is not yet consistently good across all subjects. There is too much variability in the quality of teachers' marking.
- Teachers do not always provide enough challenge for students to achieve well.
- Students do not always complete their work or respond to teachers' comments in their books.
- Students are well behaved but do not always put as much energy into their learning as they could.
- Low levels of literacy hamper the progress of some students.
- Some subject leaders are not yet effective in raising standards in their departments.

### The school has the following strengths

- A concerted effort to improve teaching has been successful. Much of the teaching is good, particularly in English, mathematics, science and physical education, and some teaching is outstanding.
- An effective pupil progress tracking system is ensuring that all teachers know what progress students are making and provide effective support for any who fall behind.
- Standards in both English and mathematics have risen this year.
- Respect, friendship and harmony are evident in this inclusive school. The college provides a safe, nurturing environment, acknowledged by both students and parents.
- The curriculum is effective in raising standards and the programme to improve students' reading skills is having a positive impact.
- The impressive leadership of the Acting Principal, supported by the entire leadership team and governing body is having a strong impact on raising standards and achievement.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in 45 lessons or part-lessons taught by 45 teachers. Three of these were joint observations with members of the senior leadership team. They visited lessons in the Minerva Centre and observed several registration sessions.
- Discussions were held with the chair of governors and several other governors, the senior leadership team, subject leaders, the special needs coordinator, a representative of the local authority and students from every year group.
- Inspectors took account of the views of parents from 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), 177 results from the school's most recent survey of parental views taken this year and comments from parents who took the trouble to write to the inspection team.
- The views of members of staff were gained from the 49 responses to the staff questionnaire, as well as in meetings and discussions with teachers.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documentation including the school's examination results and current progress data and case studies of students whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Records of attendance and behaviour were reviewed, along with improvement planning, safeguarding documents, minutes of governors' meetings, performance-management systems and information about how the school uses pupil premium funding.
- The inspection team looked at the work in many students' books in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science and humanities.

## Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Paul Latham	Additional Inspector
John Ashley	Additional Inspector
Darren Stewart	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- St Cuthbert's is slightly smaller than the average-sized secondary school.
- The large majority of students come from White British backgrounds and the proportion from minority ethnic backgrounds is low. The proportion of students who speak English as an additional language is very low.
- The proportion of students eligible for pupil premium funding is high. It includes over half of the entire school. Pupil premium is additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and those known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs supported at 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 that usually found.
- The school is host to the Minerva Centre, which is a centre for students with behavioural issues. This provision is used by other local schools as well as by students from St Cuthbert's.
- The college meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress.
- A small number of students attend alternative courses at Instant Training, Aspire, Launchpad and Achievement Sports, which are privately run organisations that offer alternative provision for some students.
- An Acting Principal and acting vice-principal have led the school since the sudden death of the headteacher in February 2013.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement by:
  - ensuring that teaching is consistently good and that work is sufficiently challenging for all students and particularly those of lower ability.
  - stimulating students' enthusiasm for learning by providing interesting tasks that motivate students to think for themselves
  - setting higher expectations for the quantity and quality of work in students' books
  - making sure that marking in all subjects is good, requiring students to respond to teachers' comments and giving them time to do this
  - requiring all subjects to take more responsibility for raising standards of literacy by improving students' spelling, punctuation, grammar and communication skills
  - improving the skills of all subject leaders to match those of the best.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### requires improvement

- Standards were well-below average in 2013 and students did not make enough progress in English or mathematics. This year shows a picture of rapidly rising standards and students in Year 11 are set to reach national averages in English and science and close to national in mathematics. Better progress is also evident in Year 10.
- Students are increasingly making good and better progress in individual lessons. However, there is more to do to make sure that students achieve at least national standards in their other subjects by the time they take GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11.
- Few students now take GCSE examinations in mathematics and English before the end of Year 11. Those who do so have been successful. Instead, the college has re-introduced formal 'mock' examinations to provide practise in working in examination conditions. The college has also re-introduced formal examinations for all at the end of every year.
- Where achievement is too low it is because students are less than enthusiastic about their learning and activities are not pitched at the right level for them.
- In an increasing number of subjects, students are developing important skills and achieving well. Good participation and learning were seen in physical education and music, and in history students discussed civil rights in a mature and sophisticated manner. Lower-ability students were very enthused about how to survive a tsunami and why tsunamis occur. In addition, Year 10 students made outstanding progress in dance where they showed they could think for themselves and incisively gauge their own performances. Students showed they had precision, knowledge and accuracy in the warm-up sessions to dance and physical education lessons.
- The most able are making good progress because expectations are high and they are provided with challenging tasks which develop the necessary subject skills. More students are predicted to reach A\* and A grades than previously. Two students who reached A\* in mathematics at the end of Year 10 are currently studying AS level mathematics at a local college.
- Disabled students and those who have special educational needs are making better progress than in the recent past. This is because there are better links with feeder primary schools to highlight the difficulties they have, more frequent meetings about their progress and a greater emphasis on developing their reading skills. As a result these students are now making the progress expected of them.
- The small number of students who follow alternative courses achieve well and the great majority of them go on to further education or employment. Their attendance, behaviour and progress are carefully checked by a member of the senior leadership team.
- The gaps in attainment between students known to be eligible for free school meals and others are narrowing. In 2013 pupils supported by the pupil premium attained at about two thirds of a GCSE grade behind other students in the school in both English and mathematics. This gap is narrowing every year and has done so for the last three years.
- The gap in the achievement between boys and girls, noted at the time of the previous inspection, is also narrowing, with more boys now making the progress expected of them.
- Reading is improving for all students in Year 7 because of regular accelerated reading sessions.
- The school's focus on literacy is not always implemented effectively across subject departments. Although reading is improving, too much written work is characterised by poor presentation and inaccurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Students are keen to discuss their ideas but sometimes struggle to express themselves clearly and to explain their answers.  
Numeracy skills are improving because of rising standards in mathematics and the consistently good progress students make in science.

### The quality of teaching

### requires improvement

- Sometimes students are not given work which is sufficiently challenging to allow them to achieve

well and make the progress expected of them. This is more often the case in lower-ability sets.

- Students in the Minerva Centre behave well and benefit from a safe and calm environment where they receive plenty of individual attention. However, the learning support centre which serves just the students of St Cuthbert's lacks academic rigour and challenge so that work is sometimes too easy and is often not marked by teachers. There is little incentive, therefore, for students to try hard.
- There is a positive atmosphere for learning in most lessons, so that students enjoy different tasks and quickly develop knowledge, understanding and skills. However, this is not yet the case across all subjects and teaching therefore requires improvement.
- Students were seen making good and outstanding progress in mathematics, English, science and physical education. This was because they were interested in what they were doing and developing confidence in their own abilities and understanding. Big improvements in the quality of teaching in English and mathematics this year have led to students making far better progress. For example, when studying probability in mathematics, the students rapidly understood concepts because the teaching made learning enjoyable and exciting and the students had to respond quickly to searching questions. Students were developing skills in managing their own time and working to a deadline.
- Progress was much less secure in history and geography where tasks were not sufficiently interesting or challenging and the work in the books of some students was often incomplete and showed little evidence of time or effort. Too much work is done on worksheets. Teaching assistants play an important role in supporting the learning of disabled students and those who have special educational needs. According to need, they sometimes provide one-to-one sessions and sometimes lead small groups and allow these students to work at their own pace in developing skills and understanding.
- There is some exemplary marking, particularly in English and science. However, marking does not always comment on targets, set the next steps in learning and indicate how students can do better. Sometimes marking is not up to date and some teachers do not correct basic or subject-specific spelling, punctuation or grammar.
- Some teachers accept books which are untidy, showing little pride and with many gaps or work which is incomplete. Students do not always respond to comments from teachers asking them to re-write work, complete exercises or correct their answers.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- The college's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- Students in all year groups confirm that they feel safe and well looked after and the vast majority of parents agree.
- Students say there is little bullying and any issues are quickly dealt with by staff. They say that homophobic or racist language is rare. Students comment favourably about their personal, social, health and citizenship lessons where they learn about the problems associated with smoking, drugs and alcohol abuse. They feel well informed about the dangers associated with misuse of the internet and social media.
- Many students display confident, positive attitudes to learning and enjoy their work. However, a minority are less enthusiastic. Behaviour in lessons is typically good and any less-than-good behaviour is related to less-effective teaching.
- The behaviour of students is good.
- Behaviour around school is typically good. Students wear uniform with pride and there is little evidence of litter or graffiti. Students are personable and polite, greeting visitors cheerfully and offering to direct or escort inspectors new to the building.
- House captains were keen to introduce themselves and spoke of their pride in their school.
- The Minerva Centre provides emotional and academic support for excluded students from other schools and for students whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. It offers a safe, calm, nurturing environment for students to develop self-confidence and improve attitudes to

school and learning. Students say that they feel that the centre is helping them to return to normal school timetables.

- All students know that the school puts a high priority on attendance and over time it is slowly improving though is still not quite at national levels. The number of students who are persistently absent has dropped markedly.
- The college has robust systems to track attendance and behaviour. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and all policies are annually reviewed.

## **The leadership and management** are good

- The governors, senior leaders and subject leaders are ambitious to improve the school and equip their students for the future. They are actively and rigorously ensuring that underachievement in all its forms is not tolerated. The school has improved considerably since the previous inspection under the leadership of the Acting Principal and vice-principal.
- Much time and effort has been put into improving the quality of teaching and with considerable success. Outside consultants have provided inspiration, advice and challenge. A support team works expressly with a minority of staff to provide coaching and advice. Staff morale is high and teachers are proud to work here and keen to develop their skills as far as possible.
- The new system initiated this year for closely tracking the progress of every student is proving to be a valuable tool in driving up standards, identifying where students need more support and clearly identifying whether any particular group is making less progress. All teachers know they are accountable for the progress their students make and that this is linked to salary progression.
- Most subject and department leaders are playing an important role in securing better teaching and progress in their areas of responsibility. Long- and short-term planning has been sharpened and leaders have put systems in place to make sure that assessments are accurate. Departments such as English, mathematics and science are challenging their students to do even better and expecting more from them. However, a minority of departments lag behind in these strategies and subject leadership is therefore inconsistent in its quality and impact.
- Pupil premium funding and the Year 7 catch-up funding is being spent on tailored support for students in English and mathematics but sometimes on other subjects too, where students are falling behind. Extra staffing has allowed the college to provide smaller groups and more individual tuition. Much has been spent on resources to improve literacy, reading and the library. The catch-up funding is spent on securing a better start for students who enter school at lower National Curriculum levels. The narrowing gap in achievement shows that the funds are being used to good advantage.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and changed to provide more academic options for students and to provide more 'real-life' experiences, for example a history trip to the battle fields of Normandy and regular geography field trips. A small number of students use alternative provision to follow courses in hair and beauty, construction and business administration. The breadth of the curriculum makes a strong contribution to students' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Students take part in a daily 'sacred time' at the end of registration where they reflect upon different themes and events in the news.
- Students enjoy many additional curriculum opportunities involving sport, music, dance, artistic pursuits, foreign exchange visits, science days and master-classes in various subjects. Students and staff contribute generously to local, national and international charities.
- The college has effective partnerships with local schools and receives positive feedback on the provision in the Minerva Centre and the role it plays in helping students get back into mainstream education. The college provides well for vulnerable students from across the authority.
- The local authority has provided very effective support and advice. Two headteachers from local schools supported the Acting Principal at first and the School Improvement Partner has been a regular visitor. Educational consultants have given sterling advice and all comment on how

promptly and effectively school leaders respond to suggestions but tailor them to their own circumstances. This has been so successful that the school is now leading its own improvement.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors play an active part in holding the school to account for its performance, supporting and challenging where necessary. The governing body has been strengthened by new appointments of governors with specific educational expertise. Governors are involved in a range of different strategies to check on how well the school is doing, including taking part in scrutinising the work in students' books so that they can see progress, or lack of it, for themselves.
- They have been involved in developing a new staffing structure and helping the school to decide how to use pupil premium funding to achieve the best results for students. Governors keep a firm hold on the budget and make sure that performance reviews are rigorous. They have robust measures to ensure safeguarding requirements are met. They are totally committed to ensuring that every student has an equal chance to be successful. The chair of governors is regularly in school and all governors attend numerous school events so that they are known and recognised by parents.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	104835
<b>Local authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	442322

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	850
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Philip Swanson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Angela New
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	13 December 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01744 678123
<b>Fax number</b>	01744 678127
<b>Email address</b>	stcuthbert@sthelens.org.uk

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