



The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 111756
LEA Hartlepool
Inspection number 278769
Inspection dates 5 October 2005 to 6 October 2005
Reporting inspector Adrian Gray

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Catcote Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Hartlepool
Age range of pupils	11 to 18		TS25 4HA
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01429 273790
Number on roll	1485	Fax number	01429 273998
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr E Bostwick
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2000	Headteacher	Mr J Hughes

Age group 11 to 18	Inspection dates 5 October 2005 - 6 October 2005	Inspection number 278769
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) with four additional inspectors.

Description of the school

The English Martyrs School is a large school for pupils aged 11 to 19. It is the only 11 to 19 school in the local authority and the only Catholic secondary school. The pupils come mainly from a number of Catholic primary schools spread over a wide area; the extent of deprivation is greater than the national average and 13% of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils whose first language is believed not to be English is very small. Attainment on entry is above average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors agree with the school that it is a good school. The pupils' personal development and their well-being are outstanding features and the school community has high moral and spiritual values. Standards are good overall, although after several years of consistent improvement the school experienced a sharp fall in its results in 2004 due largely to staff absence in core subjects. Because of this, pupils' progress was inadequate in the affected subjects in 2004, although standards overall were satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4. Standards recovered well in 2005 and were well above national averages at general certificate of secondary education (GCSE). Value for money is sound. The curriculum is good overall. The care, guidance and support of pupils are good. Leadership and management are good overall; the vision for the school in terms of its values and ethos is outstanding, but areas such as assessment and monitoring are not consistently effective at all levels.

Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection. Good progress has been made in the provision of information and communication technology (ICT), but evaluation and long-term planning, though adequate, remain among the weaker areas of the school's practice. The school has a good capacity to make further improvement, as can be seen from its response to the disappointing 2004 examination and test results.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The school judges its sixth form provision to be good and inspectors agree. Students are offered a wide range of subjects at advanced subsidiary level (AS level) and general certificate of education (GCE) A2 level, and some vocational courses. The dip in the general certificate of education advanced level (GCE A-level) results in 2004 was partially attributable to staffing difficulties. The results improved in 2005. Students are now making good progress. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good and there is good capacity for further improvement. Guidance and support are strong features and help students to achieve their potential. Teaching is good and students are encouraged to develop independent learning skills through personal research. They are well supported by the tutorial system and individual interviews. Retention rates are excellent and have recently improved because of better guidance in Year 11 to help students make well informed choices. Students enjoy their studies and have very positive attitudes to learning. They are provided with opportunities to develop leadership skills and to take responsibility, for example, by leading the school council. Students make valuable contributions to the local community through charity work and other activities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop more rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating teaching, learning and achievement.

- Increase teachers' use of assessment strategies to inform their planning and to respond to the needs of the learners.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 3

The school considers achievement and standards to be good and the inspectors agree. In general, standards have risen steadily over the last six years; although there was a dip in 2004, the rising trend was restored in the 2005 national test and examination results at Key Stage 3 and GCSE. Both standards and progress were observed to be good or better in three quarters of the lessons seen.

The results of the 2004 national tests taken at age 14 were broadly average in English and above average in mathematics and science. However, achievement was inadequate overall as pupils' progress between the ages of 11 and 14 was well below that of similar pupils nationally, especially in English and science. The unvalidated 2005 results rose in all three subjects and exceeded the school's targets. Pupils' progress improved, but a clear measurement against national value-added tables was not possible at the time of the inspection.

Results in GCSE examinations fell in 2004 after a strong year in 2003, although standards remained above average in most subjects and were good overall. The proportion of pupils gaining at least five grade A to G passes remains a strength of the school. Pupils' progress from the age of 11 was broadly average, but much better than that of pupils in schools in similar areas. However, progress and standards in English and mathematics were significantly below expectations although the proportion of pupils gaining at least a grade was higher than average. In 2004, pupils did considerably less well in mathematics than in other subjects. The proportion of pupils who gained five or more A to C grades improved sharply to 68% in 2005, well above the national figure. The improvement in the proportion of A* to C grade passes in English brought the school close to the national figure for 2004 while in mathematics and science this standard was comfortably exceeded.

Standards in the sixth form are satisfactory and rising. Pass rates for advanced level courses were above the national average in 2003 and broadly average in 2004. However, the proportion of grades A to B, which was slightly above average in 2003, fell sharply and was below average in 2004; unvalidated figures for 2005 show an improvement to a broadly average standard. Standards in vocational exams are average; there have been high pass rates over the last three years to 2005, but the proportion of higher grades has been below that found nationally. Progress has been broadly satisfactory over the last four years; although inadequate in 2004, it improved and was close to the average in 2005. Students are now making good progress in lessons: progress was seen to be good or outstanding in all lessons observed by inspectors.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The school evaluates learners' personal development and well-being as outstanding and inspectors agree. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and this is reflected in their very positive attitudes to work and the daily life of the school. Standards of courtesy and behaviour are high. Pupils' personal development was seen to be good or outstanding in nine tenths of the lessons observed. Spiritual development is outstanding, with many opportunities for prayer and reflection; pupils are keen to participate in retreats and other religious activities, discussing these confidently. Pupils mature quickly, largely as a result of a carefully structured programme which covers all aspects of citizenship and personal development. Pupils benefit from learning about a healthy lifestyle; they are taught about the dangers of smoking and of the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Many pupils participate in sport and use the outdoor facilities. Pupils make a very positive contribution to the community. For example, they work as mentors in the nearby special school and contribute to local fund raising initiatives. Pupils are well prepared for adult life through a comprehensive careers guidance programme which includes work-related learning and work experience. Pupils feel safe in school and report very few instances of bullying. The rare examples of inappropriate behaviour are dealt with swiftly and serious sanctions are used when pupils do not maintain the school's high standards. Attendance is well above the national average for all schools.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school that the quality of teaching and learning is now good as the weaknesses, which affected a few subjects, have been addressed. Teaching was at least satisfactory in all lessons seen and good or outstanding in four fifths. Learners now make good progress and show good attitudes to their work as a result of effective teaching. Pupils are very well motivated by interesting activities which stretch their understanding. This good teaching, combined with pupils' very good attitudes, creates an environment in which pupils can do well. The characteristic strengths of good teaching include the very good subject knowledge of teachers, particularly in the sixth form. This leads to teachers being confident and enthusiastic in their teaching, engaging students and encouraging them to work well. The best teaching observed made good use of assessment for learning, for example, by checking students' prior learning and focusing clearly on its links with the purpose of the lesson. ICT is also used well. In the few lessons that were relatively less successful, these aspects were inconsistently applied with the result that pupils' progress was more modest, for example when there was weak planning in mathematics.

The identification of, and provision for, pupils' additional learning needs are good. Work is closely tailored to individual needs resulting in good achievement. In all age

groups, very good relationships between teachers and pupils help support successful learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Although the school evaluates its 11 to 16 curriculum as outstanding, inspectors judge it to be good. It is also good in the sixth form. All pupils enjoy a broad and balanced range of subjects that leads to a large majority achieving GCSE passes. This meets the needs of these pupils. More recently, some vocational choices have been added. The needs of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who are gifted and talented, are met well, although a few with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not have sufficient opportunities to take suitable examinations. The personal, social and health education programme enables pupils to learn about healthy lifestyles and pupils are well prepared for the world of work, induction into the sixth form and future options. Vocational courses are developing in the sixth form. The school's arts college status has a strong impact on the school and the community. Pupils have the opportunity to participate in a vast range of extra-curricular and extra learning sessions.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school judges the quality of care and guidance as outstanding but the inspection judges it to be good with some outstanding features. The outstanding development of a Catholic ethos has a considerable bearing on the pupils' values, well-being and personal development. There is a powerful sense of a community based upon the espousal and practice of clear Christian values, leading to a high quality of care and support.

Pupils are very positive about the way in which they are listened to and how they are prepared for the demands of secondary schooling. Child protection procedures are clear and understood by staff. Vulnerable pupils and those whose first language is not English are very well supported and links with outside agencies ensure that all pupils at risk receive specialist support.

The systems for monitoring the pupils' academic progress are less well developed. Although pupils do have some targets set in the major subjects, these are not always fully explained; as a result, many pupils remain unsure about the specific ways by which they can improve and cannot readily identify strengths and weaknesses in their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school judges leadership and management to be good overall and inspectors agree. However, elements of practice vary between outstanding and satisfactory. Leadership has been outstanding in articulating a vision for a Catholic comprehensive school; this has been accepted and supported by staff, pupils and parents whose opinions are

sought and valued. The school is popular and oversubscribed. Through a variety of initiatives, the school has good links with others in the borough and the diocese. The school leadership has achieved a steady rise in standards and took appropriate action to help standards recover after the dip in 2004; the new leadership in mathematics has now established an agenda for improving this key subject.

Self-evaluation is still developing; although many of its conclusions are appropriate, it does not identify areas of weakness in performance or analyse in sufficient depth. The departmental review system includes elements of good practice. Nevertheless, it is too infrequent to contribute to a strategic analysis of teaching and learning in order to secure excellence. As a result, the school has been slow to identify what distinguishes high quality teaching. The development of effective assessment systems has been hampered by the lack of agreed practice. Performance management, including that of support staff, is well established.

The governing body is hard working and conscientious. They play an unusually prominent role in setting the tone and ethos of the school. The system for heads of department reporting to the curriculum committee after departmental reviews is good practice, but there is opportunity for the governing body's role in monitoring and evaluation to be expanded especially through keeping more detailed written records of actions to hold the school's leaders to account.

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2	2
The quality and standards in foundation stage	NA	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	Yes
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2	

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	2	
The attendance of learners	2	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	3	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	3	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	insufficient evidence

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	Yes
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	Yes

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

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The English Martyrs School and Sixth Form College
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10 October 2005

Dear Students,

Everybody on the inspection team would like to thank you for the way you made us feel welcome when we inspected your school. We were very impressed with the high standard of your behaviour in lessons and around the school. We felt that all the staff work very hard to give you an education in a school with very clear moral and spiritual values – and you all helped to get this message across very effectively.

Standards in your school have been rising over the last few years and are normally above the national average. Although results dipped in 2004, the school has done well to recover and standards are now good. We spoke to quite a few of you, and received a lot of completed questionnaires from your parents, so we know that many of you are very happy with what the school does for you. We also visited many lessons and felt that the standard of teaching was good.

We have asked the school to do two things to help it move from being a good school into a really excellent one. The first is to improve the systems that the school's managers use to check on how the standards of teaching and learning are rising. We have also asked them to improve the ways in which you are given guidance on how well you are doing, and on how you can improve; this is because many of you could tell us about your target grades, but were much less confident in explaining how you could actually improve your work.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian Gray

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex B