



St Cuthbert Mayne School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 113551
LEA Torbay
Inspection number 279198
Inspection dates 7 December 2005 to 8 December 2005
Reporting inspector David Humphries HMI

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

Type of school	Comprehensive	School address	Trumlands Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Torquay
Age range of pupils	11 to 19		Devon TQ1 4RN
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01803 328725
Number on roll	1077	Fax number	01803 322273
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	Mr Michael Bovil
Date of previous inspection	15 May 2000	Headteacher	Mr Matthew Quinn

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Cuthbert Mayne is an over subscribed joint Catholic and Church of England comprehensive school with just over 1,050 students on roll, including around 170 in the sixth form. The school attracts students from a wide area, which crosses local authority boundaries. The proportion of students entitled to free school meals is slightly below the national average, though the school's catchment area includes some areas of significant deprivation. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is close to the national average. There are comparatively few pupils from minority ethnic groups or with English as an additional language. The school is currently seeking to become a specialist science school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Inspectors judge that St Cuthbert Mayne is a good school. This agrees with the view of senior managers and governors because they have a keen awareness of the school's strengths and areas for improvement and are determined to make it more effective. While frequent changes in headship have impeded progress in some areas, the school has continued to improve over recent years.

Students make good progress throughout the school and the standards they achieve at age 16 show a steady upward trend; the most recent examination results are well above the national average. Teaching is good and the school is working hard to build on the most effective classroom practice, though students are not always provided with sufficient opportunities to develop their own ideas or work independently.

Strong Christian values contribute greatly to students' spiritual and moral development and underpin the high quality care and support that is evident throughout the school. The great majority of pupils behave well and are eager to learn; the school is working hard to tackle the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of students.

The overall quality of leadership and management is good; some very capable senior and middle managers have continued to drive the school forward during several years of instability and the current acting headteacher is determined to secure further improvements. However, there are variations in the quality of leadership at all levels.

The inspection coincided with interviews for a new headteacher. The inspectors' view, based on the progress made during the last few years without stable leadership, is that the school has good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is very effective. Although students do not always have high attainment on entry, their results in examinations are above average and improving; those students who complete their studies achieve outstandingly well. The school also judges its sixth form to be good. It is aware that too many students fail to complete courses and is improving its guidance systems to address this. Attendance levels are high and students develop as confident, articulate young people with strong spiritual and moral convictions coupled with a willingness to help others. Sixth formers make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school and wider community. The head of sixth form provides excellent leadership and rigorously monitors students' progress. This has been the main factor in the substantial recent improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- ensure that the appointment of a new headteacher brings stability and clear direction to the work of the school
- ensure that the high quality leadership which is evident in some areas is developed more consistently at all levels across the school
- provide

students with more opportunities for independent learning • continue to develop and implement strategies to tackle the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of students.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

In most years the overall attainment of students on entry to the school is close to the national average, although the proportion of high ability students is always less than average. Good teaching and a clear focus on raising achievement enable students to make good progress throughout their time in the school so that the overall standards they reach at age 14 and 16 are consistently above average. In recent years test results in English at the end of Key Stage 3 have been variable but the school has worked hard to address this and the most recent results show a substantial improvement. There is a clear upward trend in examination results at the end of Key Stage 4 and the most recent results are well above average. Careful monitoring and effective target setting helps students with learning difficulties to make good progress in both key stages. More generally, students throughout the school are increasingly successful in meeting the challenging targets set by their teachers.

In the sixth form excellent leadership and rigorous monitoring of students' progress have contributed to recent substantial improvements in examination results and these are now well above average.

In recent years there have been variations in students' performance in different subjects. Often these have been associated with shortages in specialist staffing; most of these have now been resolved. More generally, procedures to monitor and analyse achievement and standards throughout the school are exemplary; senior leaders are alert to any indications of underperformance and respond promptly and determinedly.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

The personal development and well-being of students is good overall and in the sixth form it is outstanding. The school's strong Christian ethos and values contribute greatly to students' spiritual and moral development; they have a clear sense of right and wrong and appreciate opportunities for quiet reflection in assemblies and other acts of worship. While students show a keen awareness of their own community, their understanding of other cultures and societies is less well developed.

Most pupils behave very well in lessons and round and about the school. Shifting expectations brought about by frequent changes in school leadership have not been helpful in addressing the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of pupils in the main school; the present senior leadership team recognises this and is working hard to address the issue. The great majority of students have positive attitudes to their learning, good attendance and are well placed to continue their education or gain

employment when they leave the school. This is particularly true in the sixth form where attendance levels are high and students are very self-motivated.

The school provides students with a wide range of opportunities to take responsibility and work collaboratively with others through an active school council and prefect and peer mentoring programmes. Sixth form students make an outstanding contribution to the wider community: for example, by arranging an annual Christmas lunch and activities afternoon for children from local special schools. Students are strongly encouraged to adopt active lifestyles and are responding positively to the increasing range of healthy eating options available in the school canteen.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Lessons are conducted in a safe and supportive learning environment; relationships between staff and students are mostly excellent. Teachers try hard to begin lessons with activities that engage students' interest and plan a variety of activities to match students' different learning needs. In some lessons teachers make excellent use of the information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning. Often students are eager to discuss their work or the topic being covered, though they are not always provided with opportunities to develop their own ideas or work independently. There has been a very strong focus on improving teaching and learning by sharing best practice throughout the school. This is beginning to have an impact in key areas such as teaching styles, creative writing and the use of plenary sessions to probe students' understanding and progress. The school has been particularly successful in developing a range of assessment strategies. Increasingly students are evaluating their own and each others work and the quality of teachers' marking is improving, with a greater emphasis on target setting and advice on how to improve. Students appreciate the ways in which these approaches are helping them to make greater progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A broad and balanced curriculum fulfils the various statutory requirements and is well designed to meet students' needs. In Key Stage 4, students are able to choose from a wide range of optional courses including vocational subjects. The sixth form curriculum is equally broad with a good variety of academic and some vocational courses. Strong partnerships with a local school and a further education college enable students in the 14-19 age group to take subjects and courses that would not otherwise be available. The curriculum is enhanced by a rich programme of extra-curricular activities including, for example, a highly successful creative writing club. ICT is used effectively by teachers and students in many areas of the curriculum.

Students benefit from a comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education. A strong emphasis on citizenship helps students to understand their social responsibilities and develops their economic awareness.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, support and guidance is good and has some outstanding features. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are given high levels of support and this enables them to make good progress throughout the school. Provision for the most vulnerable students is outstanding. The school's strong Christian ethos encourages students to help and support others who are less fortunate. Staff are very alert to any signs of distress or unhappiness and there are well established routines for child protection. The school has an open and honest approach to bullying; students are encouraged to talk about behaviour that makes them unhappy and this is dealt with promptly and effectively. Procedures for dealing with the very few incidents of racial harassment are exemplary.

Students' progress is carefully monitored throughout the school and older students receive guidance and advice to help them choose subjects and courses and make career choices. While much of this is helpful, some sixth form students begin advanced level courses for which they are not well suited and subsequently fail to complete. The school is aware of this and is improving its guidance systems to ensure that students are placed, and remain on suitable courses.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 1

Inspectors agree with the school's judgment that leadership and management are good. During several years of instability, when there has been no substantive headteacher on a number of occasions, the school has experienced uncertainty and a shifting sense of direction. Inevitably this has impeded progress in some areas: for example, the achievement of specialist status and the development of strategies to manage the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small minority of pupils. Nevertheless, some very capable senior and middle managers have been able to drive the school forward so that the overall quality of provision has improved and issues arising from the previous inspection have been dealt with effectively.

The school knows itself very well. It elicits parents' and students' views; senior leaders use these and their own self-evaluation to accurately judge how well the school is doing and to set development priorities. The analysis of test and examination results to identify areas of underperformance and the ways in which these are tackled by senior leaders and governors are exemplary. The current acting headteacher, who is very well supported by an acting deputy, has a very strong commitment to continuous improvement and to the development of the school as a spiritual, learning community.

Governors are highly committed, knowledgeable and are increasingly confident in providing both challenge and support to senior staff.

Some senior and middle managers demonstrate exemplary practice. However, the quality of leadership at all levels is variable and the best practice is not yet consistently established across the school. Leadership and management of the sixth form are outstanding. In two years, results and attendance have improved substantially as a result of close monitoring leading to vigorous action.

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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	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
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	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
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?	2	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The behaviour of learners	2	1
The attendance of learners	2	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	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	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	1
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	2	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	2
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	Yes

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

St Cuthbert Mayne School Trumlands Road Torquay TQ1 4RN

11 December 2005

Dear Students

As you know your school was inspected on 7 and 8 December 2005. Some of you met with inspectors and many of you will have seen us around the school. We are very grateful to you for telling us how you felt about the school because this helped us to make our judgements. Some of your parents/carers responded to a confidential questionnaire or talked to us and we also took their views and concerns into account when making judgements. We encourage you to read the report because it will let you know in more detail what your school does well and how you can help it to be even better than it is now.

St Cuthbert Mayne is a good school. Effective teaching helps you make good progress and achieve well in tests and examinations, particularly in the sixth form. Most of you behave very well and are eager to learn. You have very good opportunities to participate in the life of the school and wider community and the contribution of some sixth form students is outstanding. Strong Christian values encourage you to help and support others and you are well cared for by the school.

Your school has improved over the last few years despite frequent changes of headteacher. However, there are areas where progress has been impeded and the school now needs a period of stability. The school has some very capable staff in leadership and management positions and now needs to ensure that all those in these important roles are equally effective. In lessons you often make the most progress when you are asked to develop your own ideas and work independently. Your teachers need to provide more opportunities for you to work in this way and you can help by responding positively when they do. A small minority of you who do not behave well in school need to think carefully about how your actions affect other students and restrict your own progress.

Yours sincerely

David Humphries Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools