



St Cuthbert's Catholic High School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 108535
Local Authority Newcastle upon Tyne
Inspection number 288127
Inspection date 31 January 2007
Reporting inspector Tom Grieveson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary	School address	Gretna Road
School category	Voluntary aided		Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Age range of pupils	11–18		NE15 7PX
Gender of pupils	Boys	Telephone number	0191 2744510
Number on roll (school)	1100	Fax number	0191 2742545
Number on roll (6th form)	180		
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Frank Keegan
		Headteacher	Mr J Gerard Murphy
Date of previous school inspection	1 September 2002		

Age group	Inspection date	Inspection number
11–18	31 January 2007	288127

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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Cuthbert's is a Catholic High School for boys aged 11–18. It was awarded specialist science status in 2003. The school is located in the west end district of Newcastle upon Tyne but attracts students from across the city and from neighbouring local authorities. The school caters for 1,100 boys including 180 in the sixth form. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is in line with the national average. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds comprise less than 10% of the school population, although most of these come from homes where English is not the first language. There are fewer students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at the school than found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

St Cuthbert's Catholic Voluntary Aided High School for boys is a good and increasingly effective school. Its particular strengths include the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior staff; the excellent care, guidance and support it provides for its students and the manner in which the school supports students' personal development. It has outstanding capacity to improve.

The headteacher and senior staff are resolutely focused on pursuing higher standards within the values and beliefs of the school's Catholic Mission Statement. They have a detailed understanding of the school's performance and rigorously tackle those areas and departments requiring improvement. Changes to the curriculum have been well considered and carefully introduced. The school has retained its commitment to its traditional academic core of subjects whilst broadening choice to include vocational subjects such as engineering in order to meet the needs of all students. This is recognised and supported by parents. Specialist science status has been adopted successfully. There has been a significant increase in the number of students undertaking mathematics and science subjects compared to the national trend.

Teaching is predominantly good, some is outstanding whilst a small proportion is satisfactory. Good and outstanding teachers exhibit high expectations of their students and provide a challenging context for learning. Most students enjoy their work and flourish. Their attitudes are positive towards their studies and most are keen to achieve and do well. A minority of teachers do not take enough account of students' prior learning, however, and tasks are not well matched to students' capabilities. When this occurs, the most able in particular do not achieve as well as they should.

Students' personal development and well-being are excellent. The large majority of students demonstrate exemplary attitudes towards their education and are proud of their association with St Cuthbert's. They exhibit a strong desire to do well. Behaviour observed during the inspection was exemplary. The large majority of students are well mannered and courteous. They listen attentively to their teachers and enjoy very positive relationships with each other and staff.

The level of care, guidance and support provided for students is outstanding. Students value the guidance they receive from staff and greatly appreciate the help in choosing course options and the opportunities available to be informed about future training or study. Those students who were interviewed said they are secure and trusting of staff to provide support when difficulties arise.

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection and provides good value for money.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

St Cuthbert's sixth form is good with some outstanding features. Learners enter the sixth form with broadly average attainment when compared to other sixth forms. The

progress which learners make throughout Years 12 and 13 and the standards they achieve are good. Leadership of the sixth form is outstanding. Self-evaluation is a particular strength and enables decisive action to occur to promote continuous improvement. The school's specialist science status has resulted in a large increase in the number of learners taking mathematics and science courses. Teaching and learning are predominantly good and on occasions outstanding. Most teachers provide activities which promote learners' independent skills and encourage them to express their opinions and ideas. Questioning is challenging with evident high expectations about learners' performance and work habits. Learners' personal development is very good. They are responsible young adults; the majority demonstrate commitment and positive attitudes to their studies and each other. The attention paid by staff to learners' views is very good and the care learners receive effectively supports their personal and learning needs. Learners receive exemplary guidance and advice at key times both when making course choices and following examinations. They are offered a wide range of courses, sometimes in partnership with other providers, and most are satisfied with their choices. Learners also receive detailed information about higher education and further training opportunities from speakers with first hand experience and through university visits.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that all teachers plan lessons which cater for and meet the needs of all learners.
- Improve the standards achieved by underperforming departments.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Most students enter the school with above average attainment. School and inspection evidence demonstrates that all groups of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good overall progress. Some students at Key Stage 3 make outstanding progress. Standards reached by students in Year 9 have been consistently above average in English, mathematics and science. GCSE results continue to improve. In 2006, 69% of students achieved 5 or more A* to C grades which is well above the national average. Although this figure reduces to 54% when English and mathematics are included, it remains above the national average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Personal development, including students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. Students' attitudes in lessons are on the whole exemplary, and they show a willingness to collaborate and to help each other. They are prepared

to take responsibility, for example through the school council and older students willingly provide support to their younger peers. The school is actively involved in charity work and sixth form students regularly take part in community service. Attendance is satisfactory and most students say they enjoy school. They are well informed about how to stay healthy and safe, and are aware that the food in school offers more healthy choices than previously. The development of students' key skills is very good, with a high level of proficiency in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), so that students are prepared for their future lives. Students enjoy the links with industry and in particular through the school's science specialism. Members of the sixth form have a strong sense of responsibility and are ready to move into the wider world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and occasionally outstanding. The school has revised its timetable to introduce hour long lessons. Almost all teachers are using this extended time effectively. Most lessons have a clear and well planned structure which takes account of the needs of all learners. The pace of learning is brisk with a high level of challenge, particularly when students are required to think for themselves and express their own opinions and ideas. These were drawn out through excellent questioning. In a minority of lessons however, not enough account was taken of the needs of the most able students and this limited their progress. Teachers have good subject knowledge and convey this enthusiasm to their students. They understand examination requirements well and make good use of information about students' prior attainment when planning lessons. Students say they find the guidance and advice they receive to be clear and helpful.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The school works hard to match the curriculum to the full range of learners' aspirations and capabilities. Whilst the school has maintained its commitment to the curriculum it has traditionally offered, more vocational courses have been introduced, most recently engineering, and students can progress in these subjects into the sixth form at a higher level. However, the current banding system for students moving into GCSE means that choices are not entirely flexible. The academic band for instance remains predominantly academic, although it does now include two vocational courses, one in ICT and a Young Apprenticeships in Science course which incorporates GCSE Applied Dual Award Science introduced since 2004. A good range of extra-curricular activities in sport, music and drama, is on offer. The capacity for learners to stay healthy and

safe is developed well through various subjects in the curriculum. Students receive well-structured careers guidance. Science specialism has led to some very good links with other organisations and the opportunity to take up a modern apprenticeship exists for some students in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, there is an increasing take-up of science subjects and mathematics.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

Students receive excellent care and guidance. They are themselves very appreciative of the support they receive. They know there is an adult they can turn to if they have a problem. All safeguarding procedures are in place and risk assessments are up-to-date. The progress of vulnerable children is carefully recorded including contacts with other agencies. Students say that bullying is rare and occurs more often on the lower school site. Whilst a small minority of parents expressed genuine concerns about the way the school deals with such events, those students who were interviewed consider that staff deal with matters effectively. Students receive detailed guidance on their choice of courses and, in the sixth form, an outstanding level of information on future education or training. Students' academic progress is carefully monitored. Students themselves are aware of their predicted levels or grades and their targets, and they know the difference between these. Students' views and opinions are analysed and acted upon appropriately.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Grade for sixth form: 1

The leadership of the headteacher and senior staff, including in the sixth form, is outstanding. They provide clear strategic direction firmly embedded in the school's catholic ethos. Expectations are high and the pursuit of higher standards is relentless. Monitoring procedures are rigorous and based upon a substantial understanding of the school's performance. Improvement planning is carefully targeted to tackle those areas where further progress is required. Subject leaders are held suitably to account for their work. Systematic review of subject departments provides a secure basis from which improvements can occur and accurately targets those departments which are underperforming. The professional development of staff is given high priority. Governors are effective in their role as critical friends and hold the school suitably to account for its performance. Decision-making is based upon a good understanding of the school's needs because governors receive both timely and accurate information. Recent extensions to the upper school building provide high quality accommodation which has greatly enhanced the learning environment for students and the working conditions of staff.

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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?	1	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1	1
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?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
How well learners enjoy their education	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	
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	1	

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?	1	1

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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	1	
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

St Cuthbert's High School

Gretna Road

Newcastle upon Tyne

Tyne and Wear

NE15 7PX

1 February 2007

Dear Students

Thank you for welcoming Mrs Aers and me to your school on 31 January 2007 and for the time you gave to answering our questions and discussing your work. You gave us a very positive picture of St Cuthbert's, not least because of your excellent ability to express your views and opinions in such a mature and responsible way.

The inspection report is now finished and I would like to tell you what it contains. It begins by stating that 'St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided High School is a good and increasingly effective school.' We have noted that it has particular strengths in the following areas:

- the outstanding leadership of the headteacher and senior staff
- the excellent care, guidance and support it provides for you, the students
- the manner in which the school supports your personal development and well-being.

The school also has excellent capacity to make further improvements in the future.

We were very impressed by the quality of leadership provided by your headteacher and the senior staff. Along with all of the staff, they work extremely hard to meet your needs and we know how much you appreciate their efforts. Standards are high and you have an increasing range of course options to choose from. The school has also maintained the range of traditional courses which it offers. We know that you and your parents are concerned that it should. We recognise the high quality of support which you receive in making appropriate course options which meet your learning needs.

During the inspection we enjoyed observing you in lessons and talking to you about your work. Your attitudes to your studies and desire to do well are excellent. You told us that St. Cuthbert's is a special place to learn and we agree.

We have asked your headteacher and staff to concentrate on improving two things:

- ensure that all teachers plan lessons which cater for and meet the needs of all learners
- improve the standards achieved by underperforming departments.

Perhaps you can consider how you might be able to support them in this work.

Thank you once again for the welcome you gave the inspection team and best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson

Her Majesty's Inspector