

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

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	104835
<b>Local Authority</b>	St Helens
<b>Inspection number</b>	324114
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 January 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Jim Kidd

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

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<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 on roll</b>	
School (total)	903
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Fr Philip Swanson
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs M Gallimore
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	7 December 2005
<b>School address</b>	Berry's Lane Sutton St Helens Merseyside WA9 3HE
<b>Telephone number</b>	01744 678123
<b>Fax number</b>	01744 678127

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by four Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This smaller than average college serves an area of significant social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is more than twice the national average. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that usually found. Most students are of White British heritage and very few students are new to learning English. It has been a specialist college for business and enterprise since 2004, is an accredited Fair Trade establishment, holds Bronze Eco School status and became a recognised Healthy School this year.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good college with significant outstanding features that provides first-class care, support and guidance and ensures pupils' personal development is excellent. Students are very proud of St Cuthbert's and wear their uniform with pride. They speak very highly of the help they receive from the adults who work with them. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of how the college develops their sons and daughters and, in their words, 'Have a lot of confidence in the college because it is like an extended family.'

Students behave in an exemplary manner, feel safe in college and enjoy supporting their peers when they find things difficult. They demonstrate high levels of respect for both adults and fellow students and are polite and welcoming to visitors. Students recognise that teachers and support staff respect them too and are grateful for the comprehensive guidance they receive to ensure they reach both their personal and academic targets. They give visitors very good advice on how to eat healthily and enjoy the many physical activities, sports and games on offer to them. Students have a keen understanding of cultures and religions different to their own and take the lead, through the college council, for example, in supporting a wide range of local, national and global charities.

Students consistently achieve well in their studies and attainment in both academic and vocational subjects is rising. The percentage of students reaching five or more higher grade GCSE qualifications in 2008 was above average and the highest in the college's history. There are very few students who leave the college without any formal qualification and the progress of boys and girls is broadly the same. Although standards in English and mathematics are beginning to rise, achievement in these subjects over time does not match students' achievement in most of their other subjects.

Students respond positively to the good teaching they receive. They enjoy taking responsibility for their own learning and are adept at evaluating their own performance and that of their classmates. Relationships are strong and students have many opportunities to work in pairs and groups, helping their classmates when difficulties arise. Marking is good and students benefit from accurate advice on how they can reach for higher standards.

The college's overriding emphasis on including each individual in everything it has to offer has led to the establishment of an outstanding curriculum, which ensures that students' individual needs and interests are met exceptionally well. From the comprehensive arrangements to ease transition from primary school to the excellent Key Stage 4 programmes comprising a range of academic and vocational pathways, the college does all it can to raise the aspirations of all. Specialist status facilitates a culture of enterprise and even allows students to manage their own businesses.

The visionary principal and talented college improvement team (CIT) ensure that all staff, irrespective of their levels of responsibility, are willing to support the college to the utmost in its drive for improvement. Without doubt, St Cuthbert's is a thinking college, in which self-evaluation is accurate and performance is continuously under review. It has a good capacity to improve further and provides good value for money.

### What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate students' achievement in English and mathematics across the college.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Students enter the college with broadly average standards overall, but their skills in literacy are below expected levels. They achieve well across the college and invariably reach challenging targets to attain above average standards by the time they leave, maintaining the well-established pattern of recent years. Results are notably strong in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and health and social care. The percentage of students reaching five or more grades A\* to C has improved markedly since the previous inspection.

Progress in English and mathematics is broadly satisfactory across Key Stage 3 but, as a result of the impressive 'Core' initiative in Years 7 and 8, students make good progress in applying their skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT to become more self-reliant and independent learners. They also develop good research and speaking and listening skills. Although standards and progress in English and mathematics are improving, achievement in these subjects does not fully match the good achievement consistently made by students in most of their other subjects.

The sterling work of support staff ensures that students with learning difficulties make the same good progress as their peers. Their achievement, and that of their classmates, is also reinforced by the college's specialist status which plays an important part in raising their aspirations.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

As parents comment, 'This college helps build our children's confidence, self-esteem and sense of responsibility and ensures they develop into well balanced young people.' Indeed, students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. It is exemplified by their courtesy and by the high levels of consideration they show towards each other and the adults in the college. It is demonstrated also by their excellent awareness of the importance of a balanced diet and a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour is impeccable and students are confident in sharing their feelings and concerns with teachers. They enjoy college and feel both safe and secure within it. Students' attendance is now average and has improved markedly since the previous inspection. They take full part in the many opportunities the college provides to develop their personal talents and qualities, the college council, for example. The very impressive house system fosters students' strong interest in the local, national and global communities and students take the lead in supporting a wide range of charity appeals.

The college's excellent links with schools at home and abroad ensure that students are keenly aware of religions and cultures which are different to their own. Moreover, business and enterprise status boosts students' understanding of the world of work and the Fair Trade initiative status reinforces students' commitment to ethical business. Without doubt, the college prepares its students well for life after formal education.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and there is outstanding practice in both key stages. Relationships are a major strength: students have an enormous regard for the

competence of their teachers and mutual respect abounds. In addition, students get on very well with their peers and are more than willing to support and challenge each other in groups, particularly enjoying the many opportunities they have to assess each other's progress.

In the best lessons, teachers explain the learning objectives with the utmost clarity and students are fully aware of what they need to do to reach their targets. In these lessons, students accept responsibility for their own learning and often take the lead in developing activities. In an outstanding Year 10 physical education lesson, for example, students led the warm-up activities with skill and verve and evaluated the performance of their peers with accuracy. Occasionally, however, there is a lack of realistic challenge and teachers' questioning does not require students to justify their answers.

The quality of marking is better than at the time of the previous inspection and students receive detailed comments on how they can improve their work.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 1**

The outstanding curriculum begins before students arrive in Year 7. The transition programme is of high quality and enables students to transfer smoothly and effectively from their primary schools. The excellent 'Core' programme comprises a themed approach to the curriculum and ensures that students can see the links between different subjects. It also ensures that students can practise and reinforce their skills across all areas. The college's Independent Learning Pack, for example, encourages students to follow personal research.

The curriculum comprises a variety of exciting and motivating courses and meets the diverse needs, interests and aspirations of students very well indeed. It is described by parents as 'A very interesting approach' and has an impressive impact on their personal development too. There is a strong work-related element through the college's specialist status and a range of personalised pathways in Years 10 and 11. The Gateway to Employment pathway, linked with the local authority Engagement Programme, has been identified as a model of exemplary practice. Some students have the opportunity to be entered early for GCSE examinations and move on to AS level courses in Year 11 and others can follow a range of vocational courses through links with the local further education college, Young Apprenticeship programmes and extended work placements.

Students are appreciative of the wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities which enhance relationships and make a strong contribution to their enjoyment of college life.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

The college provides a safe and very supportive environment in which students are encouraged to achieve their personal best. Both students and their parents pay testament to the caring attitude of adults in college, commenting, 'Communication with staff is excellent. Any problems are dealt with quickly, effectively and professionally.' Child protection and safeguarding systems fully meet national guidelines. There is excellent liaison with outside agencies to support students' personal, social and emotional well being.

The first-class house system underpins the welfare of students and provides stability and continuity where it is required. Provision for vulnerable students and for those with learning

difficulties is meticulously planned but is also flexible to individual needs. It supports students who need it, while promoting their independence and self reliance.

The quality of advice and guidance, in relation to students' academic development and their career aspirations is outstanding. They run seamlessly from transition in Year 7, to options choices in Year 9 and to further and higher education information in Year 11. The monitoring and recording of students' progress is very well developed and the use of 'target cards' ensures that students are aware of their current performance and of how to reach their potential. As a result, students invariably reach their challenging targets in both personal and academic terms.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The restructured leadership team is already having an impressive impact on achievement across the college. The inspirational leadership of the principal, who is fully supported by a committed and talented CIT, ensures that the vision for college development is shared by all, including the students. The leadership and management of the business and enterprise strand are good and ensure that students benefit well from specialist status.

Subject and pastoral leaders speak positively about the support they receive from senior staff and add that their opinions are valued and contribute directly to whole-college policy. Indeed, the CIT is developing middle leadership well and is beginning to improve subject leaders' skills in self-evaluation. At whole-college level, the evaluation of performance is accurate and leaders recognise that achievement in English and mathematics is not as high as in many other subjects.

The college's contribution to community cohesion and promoting equality is outstanding. In the locality, the college is the hub of family support and of educational and regenerative activities. Links with people across the globe are diverse and exciting and are enhanced by the unique opportunities for residency afforded by the school's 'Hotel Lindisfarne.' Over recent years, visitors from 78 different countries have stayed in the hotel and visited the college.

Governors have good links with the college, are fully supportive of everything it tries to do, but are never afraid to challenge the leadership with rigour when they feel it is necessary.

**Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**



**Annex A**

## Inspection judgements

<b>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</b>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

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

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	1
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

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

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**Annex B**

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Inspection of St Cuthbert's Catholic Community College for Business and Enterprise, St Helens, WA9 3HE

Thank you all for your kindness and courtesy when the inspection team visited your school last week. You gave us a warm welcome and we enjoyed talking to you and watching you learn. We are particularly grateful to those of you who came to talk to us on Thursday lunchtime and also to the budding chefs who prepared such delicious (and healthy) food for us on both days. We would now like to tell you what we think about your college.

St Cuthbert's is a good college and we know that you are very proud of it. There are several things about the college which are outstanding: your behaviour, your attitudes to learning and how your teachers and learning support assistants look after you, for example. You are taught well and this is why you make good progress in your work across the college and why examination results are improving. We think that you could do even better in English and mathematics and we have asked your teachers to challenge you more to improve your standards and progress in these two subjects.

Your principal and all the other staff do a lot to prepare you for life after college. They have put together an excellent curriculum, which gives you many opportunities to follow the courses of your choice and also to get ready for the world of work or for further study. Business and enterprise reach all aspects of college life and you even run your own companies! Your teachers make sure that you celebrate religions and cultures which are different to your own and the excellent local, national and global links the college has help everyone to understand that we are all part of the same community.

Once again, thank you so much for your wonderful contribution to the inspection and for the marvellous way you look after each other. Please keep enjoying college and working as hard as you can.