

St Cuthbert Mayne School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	113551
Local Authority	Torbay
Inspection number	325843
Inspection dates	25–26 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Karl Sampson HMI

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

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	11–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	1125
Sixth form	153
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Lashbrooke
Headteacher	Cathy Gifillan
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
School address	Trumlands Road Torquay TQ1 4RN
Telephone number	01803 328725
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Age group	11–19
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

St Cuthbert Mayne is a large voluntary aided joint Catholic and Church of England school. It draws students from Torbay and the surrounding area and nearly a third of its students travel to and from the school by coach. Almost all students are of White British heritage and the percentage from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is not English is much lower than the national average. The percentage of students entitled to free school meals is low and the proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below the national average. These include students who have specific learning difficulties or who have social, emotional and behavioural issues. There is a slightly higher than average proportion of students who have a statement of special educational need. Since the last inspection, there has been significant restructuring at leadership level with the appointment of a new headteacher, two new deputy headteachers and two new assistant headteachers. The school was designated as a specialist mathematics and computing and science school in 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its students. Following a period of instability prior to the last inspection, the school was asked to ensure that secure leadership was established through the appointment of a substantive headteacher. The governors appointed a quietly determined leader who is passionate about providing the best possible education for her students. She has had a complex start to her journey, thwarted by high levels of long-term staff illness and some resistance to change. However, she has successfully steered her way along this difficult route. The headteacher has made good use of the local authority to signpost her route and secure the momentum for change. A strong and cohesive senior leadership team has now been created. They have implemented a consistent management system across the school, the need for which was highlighted at the last inspection. Senior leaders are fully aware that the next step is to use information gained from these more rigorous monitoring procedures to secure improved outcomes for students' achievement and personal development.

The headteacher and her senior leadership team have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and areas requiring development, and they demonstrate the capacity to move forward at a steady pace. At times, they overestimate how quickly they can travel with an over generous self-evaluation. They are well supported by governors who are committed to ensuring that the senior leadership team has the resources it needs. However, the actions taken by the leadership team are not always sufficiently tested by all governors to ensure they are effective. A significant minority of parents expressed concerns about the leadership and management of the school and were particularly concerned by the high numbers and frequent use of temporary teachers. Whilst the inspection team understand these concerns, they are confident that the headteacher and her leadership team are steadily rectifying these problems.

A significant minority of parents also raised concerns about the progress their children are making. Whilst the school results show a drop this year, leaders and managers have implemented a series of interventions which suggest that standards and achievement are improving. The curriculum is satisfactory but links between subjects are being created by senior leaders to ensure that the learning is more meaningful to the students and engages the boys more through practical approaches. The specialist status for mathematics and computing and science is being used to raise standards in these subjects through improvements in teaching and learning. Students who experience problems with their learning achieve well because they are well supported.

Most students enjoy coming to school and are particularly enthusiastic about their social opportunities, including participating in the good range of enrichment activities on offer. They are sensitive and reflective young people. One parent described the school as 'a community where staff, children and parents are respected'. Partnerships with other schools and places of work are of high quality and this enhances the students' learning. Their involvement in the school and wider community is good and they take on responsibilities with pride. They are very well cared for and feel safe and secure. A significant minority of parents raised concerns about students' behaviour. The headteacher has worked effectively to rectify the unsatisfactory behaviour of a significant minority of students, which was an issue at the last inspection. An agreed code of conduct to manage and drive up expectations for behaviour amongst staff and students has resulted in an improving picture. Behaviour is variable at times when students are not sufficiently engaged in their learning, but it is satisfactory overall.

The attitudes of the students to their studies also reflect the satisfactory quality of teaching. As an area for development at the last inspection, a good number of lessons are now presented in an interesting manner. Some teachers have started to give students opportunities to develop independent skills to motivate them and in these lessons, the learning is good. This is not yet consistently applied across the school and, when there is too much 'teacher-talk' and tasks do not meet the needs of individuals, the students become bored and their attitudes are less than positive. A recent target-setting system to help the students focus their efforts is not yet used consistently by all staff to support students in their learning. The marking of students' work is not consistent throughout the school or between departments. This means that not all students are guided towards the next step in their learning.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 3

■ The school offers a broad range of A-level courses and a small number of vocational courses. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory, but there is some variability in the standards reached in different subjects. Whilst in most subjects, students perform in line with or above expectations, in some, results have been below expected levels. Leadership and management are satisfactory. New systems have been introduced to monitor sixth form performance. These are now used more effectively to identify areas of underachievement. An analysis of current results shows a clear improvement in the rate of students' progress. However, monitoring and evaluation is not yet sufficiently rigorous to tackle inconsistencies in student performance in some subjects. Retention rates are high and are evidence of students' enjoyment of the sixth form. Pastoral care is good and students value the good support from their teachers. They enjoy life in the sixth form and blossom into confident, outgoing and mature individuals. They mentor younger students, make a positive contribution in their work with the local community and have established good international links. Students are well advised about higher education, training and employment options. Students appreciate the recent changes to systems for academic guidance; although students are aware of their current attainment, they are less sure about what they need to do to improve their learning. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Opportunities for students to engage fully and work independently are not consistent across the subjects.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure all teachers use assessment data consistently to identify students who may not be achieving as well as they might.
- Build the capacity of leaders at all levels to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning throughout the school to ensure that it is of a consistently high quality.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by sharing the good practice introduced in some departments and increasing opportunities for the students to take more responsibility for their learning.
- Embed fully the new marking and target-setting systems to enable all students to have a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Students enter the school with average standards. They maintain broadly average standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. In 2008, the proportion of students gaining at least five GCSE passes at grades A* to C was below the national average, as was the proportion when English and mathematics are included. Issues of long-term illness hampered progress in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) and underperformance was most apparent in the case of boys at Key Stage 4. The introduction of smaller support groups and the careful targeting of individuals have increased the rate of progress made by all students and this is now satisfactory. Consequently, current standards are now broadly average. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress as a result of careful tracking, prompt intervention and well targeted additional support.

The school has recently improved its system to monitor the progress of students which now ensures that it sets challenging targets for all. This is a result of a focus on using performance data more effectively to identify, target and support students' academic progress. The school's latest analysis of performance, coursework assessments and externally assessed tests for 2009 suggests that students are on track to achieve better results.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

As a result of good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, students develop their personal skills and think about others. They fundraise extensively for local, national and international charitable causes. They are rightly very proud of this work. The students have a good understanding of their responsibilities as global citizens. Good examples of this can be seen in their work with local Polish and Filipino communities and strong links with South Africa. Students attend school regularly and understand the importance of eating sensibly and taking regular exercise. They use this knowledge well on a day-to-day basis to inform their diet and sporting choices. Students are confident that any bullying is dealt with effectively. They feel confident that their views are highly valued and their concerns are carefully listened to. Behaviour is variable, especially when students are less engaged in lessons, but it is satisfactory overall. In some cases, students' enjoyment of school is adversely affected as a result of disruption to their learning. Students' skills in literacy are good but they are less secure in mathematics and ICT. Consequently, students' basic skills are satisfactory overall which results in a satisfactory preparation for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Whilst satisfactory overall, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching and not all students achieve as well as they could. Where there have been staffing difficulties, for example in mathematics and ICT, teaching has been weaker. In good lessons, students are engaged in their learning. This is especially evident when lessons show careful planning, set clear lesson objectives and a variety of activities are chosen that support effective learning. In the best sessions, students respond well to the opportunities for independent learning through group work, discussion and research. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to ensure all

students feel supported and confident to achieve. However, in a significant minority of lessons, students are not sufficiently involved in their learning and the tasks set do not challenge them. Consequently, in these lessons, some students work at a slower pace, become distracted and disrupt the learning of others. These lessons are often dominated by teachers talking at length and, as a result, learners are too passive.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum provides satisfactory opportunities for the majority of learners to enjoy their education and achieve. An improving curriculum, particularly in ensuring its relevance and interest, is being introduced. However, it is too early to identify sustained improvement in achievement as there has been an inconsistent impact on student outcomes. At Key Stage 4, the range of accredited courses on offer has increased to match more effectively the wide range of interests, aspirations and abilities of students. For example, an increasing number of students identified as likely to benefit from an alternative curriculum are able to follow individualised curriculum routes at the local college. The provision for literacy is good but long-term staffing issues in mathematics and ICT mean that provision to develop these basic skills is satisfactory overall. At Key Stage 3, a new course has been introduced to develop students' creativity and independent learning skills. Where these initiatives have been adopted, this is having a positive effect on students' involvement in lessons.

The personal, social and health education programme ensures that students are prepared well for this aspect of their future lives. There is good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school's focus on providing a good understanding of careers options and the acquisition of workplace skills helps ensure students are satisfactorily prepared for their working futures. Progression routes are clear and well established. This enables each student to choose the most appropriate pathway to suit their individual needs. A good range of enrichment activities including trips, special events and extra-curricular activities is offered. In addition, an increasing number of subject departments offer lunchtime clubs, homework support and additional lessons after school. Students confirm that, when available, they value these opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides students with good pastoral care and support. The staff have a very good understanding of the students' individual needs which are catered for well. Systems for supporting students' attendance are good. The school has effective child protection, safeguarding, and health and safety systems in place. Effective working relationships with primary schools enable a smooth transition from Year 6 into Year 7. The school makes good use of outside agencies and effective systems are in place to support Year 11 and Year 13 students in transition to further education and the world of work. Students learning English as an additional language, who come to school with no English, receive high quality support. Support for vulnerable students is well coordinated and there is good provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

New systems have been introduced to guide students in their academic work but their management and implementation is inconsistent across different subject areas. For example, the English department has embraced this guidance thoroughly and the students understand exactly what they need to do to improve their work. However, in other subjects, notably in

mathematics, the students are not given sufficient direction towards the next steps in their learning. The school recognises the urgency that is required for these new systems to become established and have an impact on the quality of standards and achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a very clear sense of direction and more stable staffing is beginning to have a positive effect on standards and achievement and the quality of teaching. The headteacher is deeply committed to a collegiate approach to leadership so that quality can be secured in every aspect of the school's work. Her direction and vision is complemented by a restructured senior leadership team and a group of middle managers who are more empowered to 'take the initiative' and manage change. They are all developing a better understanding of their role in supporting, challenging and being innovative. Together, they are developing good systems to track students' progress. By analysing data, they have started to set challenging targets and ensure that the school continues to provide adequate value for money.

Senior leaders have rightly identified improving teaching as a key priority but best practice is yet to be shared effectively across the school. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching by middle and senior leaders is developing but is not yet sufficiently rigorous to improve outcomes in all subjects. Governors are supportive and the regular involvement of a number in the day-to-day life of the school ensures that they have an appropriate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. However, not all governors are fully involved in holding the school to account. The school contribution to community cohesion is strong given its ecumenical nature, but is satisfactory overall because it has not yet formally evaluated its practice.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3	3

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	3	2
The attendance of learners	3	2
The behaviour of learners	3	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	3
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	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 February 2009

Dear Students

Inspection of St Cuthbert Mayne School, Torquay TQ1 4RN

- We very much enjoyed meeting you on our visit to your school. Special thanks should go to the student guides who helped us find our way around the school. It was very informative to hear all of your views and it helped us to reach our judgements. These are the main findings of our report.
- Your school offers you a satisfactory education and has worked hard since the last inspection to improve the provision it offers. The headteacher and other school leaders are working more effectively to make your school even better. You told us that you valued the efforts of the staff in your school. You also praised the level of care which you receive and, as a result, you feel safe and well looked after. Those of you who require additional support are making good progress. We think that you are developing well as young people who value their education, understand the importance of staying healthy and safe, and who willingly help others. We were particularly impressed by the positive contribution that you make to the community and the way that the older students helped younger ones.

Most of you make satisfactory progress and, although the levels you reach are as expected, we think that you can achieve even more. Teaching is satisfactory and whilst it is improving, some inconsistency still remains within and across the different subjects. There is a good system to track your progress but we found teachers do not consistently use information from assessments to match lessons to your abilities and help you plan your next steps in learning. This means that not all of you know how best to manage your own learning.

We have asked the school to ensure that all of you know how to improve your work and how to take more responsibility for your own learning. We have also asked teachers to make more effective use of assessment information to plan your next steps in learning and ensure that you make better progress. Finally, we have asked the leaders at the school to spend more time looking at teaching and working out how your learning might be improved. You can certainly help the teachers with some of these things. Thank you once again for your help during our visit, and good luck with your work in the future!

Yours faithfully

Karl Sampson Her Majesty's Inspector