

St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133293
Local Authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	341372
Inspection dates	11–12 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Ann Wallis

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	11–16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	923
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Stewart Burton
Headteacher	Mr Colin Reid
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by five additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 40 lessons, spoke with the acting Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner and a local authority representative. They held meetings with staff and groups of students. They observed the school's work, and looked at students' books, the school improvement plan, school data tracking the progress of current students, and other documentation. They also analysed 85 parent questionnaires, 120 student questionnaires and 53 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the progress of all students, particularly in mathematics and science
- the quality of teaching, particularly the use of assessment and the pace of lessons
- the quality of the care, guidance and support given to students and whether this is a strength of the school
- the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governors, and its impact on the school's capacity to improve.

Information about the school

This average-sized school serves an area of north Hartlepool. Very few students are from minority ethnic groups or are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well above average. A well above-average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has been a specialist Engineering College since 2004. It holds Healthy Schools and Sportsmark awards and has Investors in People status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

St Hild's is a satisfactory school where students are well cared for and receive good guidance and support. Senior leaders have a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses because they are now monitoring its work more closely. They are firmly focused on raising standards and, although attainment has been low, it is now rising and students' learning and progress, particularly in mathematics, are improving securely and quickly. Appropriate priorities for further improvement have been identified, new systems are in place to track students' progress more effectively and, hence, the school has a satisfactory and growing capacity to improve.

The percentage of students gaining five or more A* to C grades in GCSE shows an upward trend and increased by 8% in 2009. However, disappointing results in mathematics halted an upward trend in the percentage of students gaining five or more higher grades including English and mathematics and this figure remains significantly below average. Students' progress, given their well-below-average starting points, is satisfactory. Students were seen making satisfactory and often good progress in most lessons because the vast majority of teaching is at least satisfactory and much of it is good. However, the quality of teaching is still inconsistent across the school and good practice, such as that seen in history and English, is not shared sufficiently across the school. In a minority of lessons, particularly in science, the pace of learning and teachers' expectations are too low. Leaders and managers are well aware that a very small amount of inadequate teaching remains and have clear strategies to eradicate this. The post of Chair of the Governing Body is currently vacant and new governors have yet to be fully trained and involved in the work of the school. Although supportive of the school, governors are not currently involved in determining priorities for improvement and, hence, inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that governance is inadequate.

A strength of the school is the productive partnerships it has forged, partly as a result of its specialist engineering status, with other schools, organisations and outside agencies. These support the curriculum, support vulnerable students and aid students' transition between the different stages of their education. Most importantly, strong partnerships with the School Improvement Partner, the local authority and another local school through the 'Gaining Ground' project are all helping to raise attainment, accelerate students' progress and are contributing to the schools capacity to improve further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment by ensuring that learning and progress are consistently good

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across a wider range of subjects including mathematics and science.

- Reduce inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - eliminating the small amount of inadequate teaching
 - increasing the pace of learning
 - raising all teachers expectations of behaviour in lessons
 - sharing good practice across the school
 - encouraging students in all lessons to be more actively involved in their own learning, to assess their own performance and to learn independently.
- Ensure that governors play a full part in the drive for higher standards by monitoring the work of the school more closely and becoming more involved in setting appropriate priorities for improvement.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Students were seen to be making satisfactory progress in lessons and work in their books confirmed that their rates of progress are now accelerating. Although students' attainment on entry to the school does fluctuate from year to year, overall it is well below average. In all years a well-above-average proportion of students have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These students make the same satisfactory progress as their peers because the curriculum is well matched to their needs and they receive constructive individual help from teachers and teaching assistants. Although attainment has been significantly below average for the last three years, value added indicators show students had been making good progress from their starting points in 2007 and 2008. However, results overall declined in 2009 and students' achievement, particularly in mathematics and science, was below that of many other subjects. Work seen during the inspection and the school's detailed tracking data now confirm that current students are well on track to reach, or have already reached, their challenging targets this year.

Attendance is average and the school has been very successful in reducing the number of students who were persistently absent from school. In the majority of lessons behaviour is satisfactory and often good; however, there are instances of low-level inattention and sometimes disruption when teachers' expectations are not high enough. Students have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles and the benefits of exercise. There is a high take-up of school meals and many students enjoy participating in extra-curricular sport. Students willingly take responsibility and participate in school life through fund-raising, as prefects and through the recently revived school council. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. A strength of this work is students' spiritual development. The school's Christian ethos is particularly demonstrated in year assemblies where the spiritual dimension and self-worth are

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developed in a relevant and meaningful way.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall but is inconsistent across the school and varies from a very small amount of inadequate teaching to much which is good. In good lessons activities are varied and interesting, students work at a brisk pace and are encouraged to assess their own and each other's work. In less successful lessons, which lack these qualities, progress is slower because teachers often talk for too long and students have few opportunities to learn independently. Work is marked regularly and there are examples of very helpful marking which indicates clearly to students how they can improve their work. However, this good practice is not yet consistent across the school.

The satisfactory curriculum is broad and balanced and meets students' needs. It has strengths in the variety of courses offered for older students and in the range of alternative provision for those students who are in danger of becoming disaffected. The school offers a range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities which attract good

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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levels of participation from students and, in some cases, parents. Good partnerships with other organisations and the beneficial impact of the school's specialist engineering status support the curriculum well. The cross-curricular development of literacy and numeracy skills is satisfactory.

The school works well with outside agencies and has very good procedures in place to support all students and particularly those who are vulnerable. One parent commented that the school 'has gone the extra mile' to help a student to achieve their potential. Transition into the school as well as career advice is also a strength of the school. Clearly targeted action has helped the school to reduce serious behavioural issues as well as making significant improvements in attendance.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The recently appointed headteacher and members of the senior leadership team are increasingly effective in driving improvement and communicating their vision for the school. Much improved systems to capture data, track students' progress and make use of this to plan learning are now in place. Teaching and learning are more rigorously monitored through a cycle of departmental reviews which, together with well-targeted staff support and training, are leading to improvements in teaching.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. All health and safety, risk assessment and child protection procedures meet requirements. This is an inclusive school which promotes equal opportunities satisfactorily. The school monitors the achievement of groups of students and takes action to ensure all achieve equally well. For example, a 'super learning' day in mathematics was seen taking place to ensure middle- attaining students achieved their potential. The school promotes community cohesion satisfactorily. It has an informed understanding of the local community and links with communities further afield but has yet to fully evaluate the impact of this work. Although governance is currently inadequate, the school and local authority are working together to strengthen the capacity of the governing body so that it can play a full part in driving up attainment. Financial management is secure and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the education their child receives. A few parents wrote about their concerns about students' behaviour but inspectors felt that incidents of poor behaviour were dealt with effectively by the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 89 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 923 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	33	47	53	7	8	3	3
The school keeps my child safe	30	34	49	55	6	7	1	1
The school informs me about my child's progress	38	43	44	49	4	4	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	32	36	42	47	11	12	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	26	29	49	55	8	9	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	24	49	55	14	16	2	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	21	24	50	56	13	15	2	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	32	36	44	49	4	4	2	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	29	33	43	48	12	13	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	27	44	49	12	13	6	7
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	20	22	45	51	13	15	3	3
The school is led and managed effectively	28	31	44	49	9	10	4	4
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	33	37	37	42	11	12	1	1

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



13 January 2010

Dear Students

Inspection of St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School, Hartlepool, TS24 9PB

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school this week. We are particularly grateful to those of you who talked with us and gave us your honest views about your school.

These are some of the main findings in our report:

- your achievement, learning and progress are all satisfactory, although your attainment is low
- you receive good care, guidance and support
- your behaviour is satisfactory and your attendance is average
- teaching and assessment are satisfactory as is the curriculum you follow
- leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of your school and are helping it to improve further.

This is what we have asked your school to do now:

- raise your attainment by ensuring that your learning and progress are consistently good across a wider range of subjects, including mathematics and science
- improve the quality of teaching so that all lessons are as good as the best ones
- ensure that governors, along with all senior and middle managers, play a full part in the drive for higher standards at your school.

You can help your school improve further by behaving well in lessons, attending school regularly and working with your teachers to achieve the very best you can.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Ann Wallis

Lead inspector

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