



St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic High School, Rochdale

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 105845
Local Authority Rochdale
Inspection number 300615
Inspection dates 7–8 March 2007
Reporting inspector John Dunne

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

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|-------------------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Type of school | Secondary | School address | Shaw Road |
| School category | Voluntary aided | | Rochdale |
| Age range of pupils | 11–18 | | Lancashire OL16 4RX |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed | Telephone number | 01706 647761 |
| Number on roll (school) | 1413 | Fax number | 01706 642378 |
| Number on roll (6th form) | 127 | | |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body | Chair | Fr Martin Collins |
| | | Headteacher | Mr J Wood |
| Date of previous school inspection | 11 November 2002 | | |

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| Age group | Inspection dates | Inspection number |
| 11–18 | 7–8 March 2007 | 300615 |

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by five Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic High is a larger than average comprehensive school. The social and economic background of students is broadly average. The number of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The majority of students are of White British origin and the proportion who do not speak English as their first language is low. The number of students identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. Attainment on entry to the school is average. The school has achieved a number of awards. These include Silver Arts Mark, Sportsmark, Healthy Eating Award and the Princess Diana Memorial Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with many good features. It cares for its students well and standards are improving in all year groups and are similar to those achieved nationally. All students make satisfactory progress between the ages of 11 and 16. Progress in English is better than in mathematics and science. Students' behaviour is good around the school. It is also good in the lessons where there is challenge and interesting and well planned work. However, not all lessons have these features.

The headteacher is effective and has a clear vision of what the school needs to do to improve. Most middle and senior managers share this vision and are effective in assessing the performance of their areas and holding people accountable for the work they do. The school has recently restructured systems and has improved its ability to keep track of students' academic and personal development. Directors of learning and pastoral managers work well with subject leaders to ensure that those who are not making the expected progress are quickly identified and measures are put in place to bring about improvement. This has been a significant factor in recent improvements in standards.

The school has introduced a new range of subjects and this is becoming successful in engaging students at risk of becoming disaffected. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of business and enterprise activities and after-school clubs. The school's citizenship course, which it calls the 'Friday Guidance Programme', has been well developed in a short space of time. This is valued by all students who say that it helps to prepare them to become confident citizens. The school effectively develops students' understanding of what it is like to live in an ethnically diverse society.

Students' personal development is good and they are aware of what they need to do to stay safe and be healthy. The school places the promotion of its Catholic ethos very high in its priorities. It goes to great lengths to provide extensive opportunities for students to attend retreats and other events and this makes an outstanding contribution to their spiritual and moral development.

The recent restructuring of provision for students with additional needs has significantly improved their progress. Good management and skilful teaching assistants and teachers ensure that students have all the support they need.

There are good systems in place in the behaviour support unit for students who misbehave.

The school delivers good value for money. All of the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection have been successfully dealt with. Governors share the vision of the headteacher. They are well informed about the school and the areas where it needs to improve further.

The majority of parents are appreciative of the efforts that the school makes on their children's behalf. A minority feel that the school should do more to take account of pupils' and parents' views.

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form is good. Leadership and management of the sixth form are effective and self-evaluation is good. Standards are satisfactory. There are robust systems in place to support students and track their progress, involving them in regular self-reviews. This analysis illustrates that students make good progress. However, achievement in biology is not as good. Students do less well at AS level. The students have very positive attitudes and feel that they are given opportunities to take responsibility, make decisions and contribute to the school community including the 'make a difference' team and the support for younger pupils in paired reading. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and progress is good in those lessons that are well planned with a high level of challenge. The students feel that they have more opportunities to be actively engaged. The curriculum is good and has been broadened by the provision of vocational courses in addition to the traditional AS and A2 courses. There is also a range of enrichment activities and residential opportunities. Students appreciate the good support and guidance they receive and speak positively about relationships with staff. Retention rates are high and all students progress to higher education or employment.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality of lesson planning so that work is more appropriately matched to all learners' abilities.
- Increase the level of challenge across all lessons so that students are motivated and enjoy their learning.
- Raise standards at Key Stages 3 and 4 in mathematics and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

Standards have steadily improved in recent times and are now satisfactory overall. When students join the school their levels of attainment are similar to those nationally. They now make satisfactory progress and as a result standards in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 3 are similar to those achieved nationally. Progress in English is better than in mathematics and science, though the most able students made very good progress in mathematics in the 2006 Key Stage 3 tests. Students' standards have also improved at Key Stage 4 and the percentage achieving five or more A* - C grades at GCSE is also similar to those nationally. Within this positively improving picture, students do not achieve quite as well in GCSE mathematics and science as they do in English. As a result the percentage achieving five or more good grades including mathematics and English is slightly lower than average.

Students have opportunities to study vocational courses at school and at local colleges. This has had the positive effect in engaging some of those who were at risk of becoming

disaffected and lose interest in school. Hairdressing, delivered in collaboration with two other schools, and health and social care, are successful examples of such courses.

Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to the very good support they receive from skilful teaching assistants. Students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally as well as their White British counterparts.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Students' personal development and well-being is good. Attendance is broadly average and improving; however, punctuality in arriving at school and to lessons is not as good. Students say they feel confident and safe in school. Their behaviour around school is good and they recognise that instances of poor behaviour are well managed.

Students have good relationships with the staff and with each other. They are increasingly positive in their attitudes to school, although a minority continue to have a passive attitude to learning, which impacts on their attainment. They demonstrate a good understanding of what it means to live a healthy lifestyle through the school's work in achieving the 'Healthy Schools Award' and through the high emphasis placed on physical development. There is a good range of extra-curricular and residential opportunities which further their educational, sporting, musical and theatrical interests, promoting both their personal development and their community involvement.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Assemblies and religious education lessons encourage thoughtful and caring attitudes and all students are encouraged to make a good contribution to the school and wider community. They respond extremely well to opportunities to show initiative or take responsibility and many serve as year or school council members, or in the sixth form as mentors to younger students. Pupils have a very good awareness of a spiritual dimension to their life and know about different religions and faith traditions. In Year 12 students have a very good awareness of the cultural diversity of modern British society.

Students are equipped with basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) to provide them with a good foundation for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. In the most successful lessons, teachers have good relationships with students and use a variety of activities

to capture their interest. Students also know the targets they are working towards. Some outstanding teaching was observed in business studies and food lessons where students of all abilities made significant progress. This was because the teachers had high expectations, used questioning skillfully to help students think and extend their learning, and had planned activities that challenged and motivated students. This enabled students to discuss ideas thoughtfully and to produce high quality work.

In otherwise satisfactory lessons, teachers' planning does not show how the range of students' needs is to be met through the classroom activities. Lesson objectives are not always clear, shared or reviewed. In these lessons, students quickly lose attention because of too much teacher input and mundane work which fails to challenge them and they become reluctant to contribute to class discussions.

The school has good systems in place to monitor and improve the quality of teaching and learning, including the use of data to set targets and monitor performance. This is leading to improved achievement. However, the tailoring of lessons to meet the different ability range of students, and the use of learning objectives to measure progress, is not yet developed across the school. The quality of teachers' marking of students' work is not consistent.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The curriculum is good and becoming more flexible and inclusive. For example, since the last inspection, Key Stage 4 students now have access to alternative courses such as work-related learning. This helps to keep them motivated and furthers their enjoyment of their education. There are also progression routes into the sixth form if students want to continue these courses to a higher level. At Key Stage 3 dance and drama enhance students' creative development. They also receive additional support as needed to improve their literacy and numeracy.

Higher ability students have the opportunity to do additional courses after school, Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from improved provision, for example, through teaching assistants to support their learning. Students with English as an additional language also benefit from specialist provision.

The broad and balanced curriculum is further enriched by a range of extra- curricular activities that parents think highly of and students enjoy. The school's guidance programme contributes to the strong work-related and enterprise dimension of the curriculum which helps students prepare well for the future. The school is proud of its award for its enterprise work in Rochdale.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

The quality of care, support and guidance for students of all ages is good. Arrangements to ensure health and safety work effectively. Procedures for child protection are well established and understood by staff. Students' work and behaviour is monitored carefully. Staff encourage students to keep safe and be healthy, aided by significant improvements in healthy eating options available at lunchtimes.

Teaching assistant support is sensitive, well coordinated, and very effective in promoting the well-being of students, particularly vulnerable pupils and those with additional needs. Parents are well informed about their children's progress and they like the 'postcards home' which celebrate particular achievements.

Rigorous systems for setting targets and monitoring progress assist students to achieve their potential and successfully contribute to their confidence and self-esteem. Students regularly check up on their own progress as part of the Friday Guidance Programme. They know how well they are doing and how to improve.

Students have the opportunity to discuss their option and career choices with teachers and careers advisors at key stages in both the main school and sixth form. As a result, they are able to make well informed decisions, and increasing numbers are participating in education or training after leaving school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Grade for sixth form: 2

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher, the senior leadership team and governing body have established a clear direction for the school and this shows that there is a good capacity to improve further.

A robust process for tracking students' progress and setting challenging targets has been established and this has been a key factor in raising standards. A large budget deficit has been eliminated and this has now been translated into a surplus. This extra finance has been used to improve provision of ICT equipment, employ additional staff and upgrade the fabric of the building. This effective use of resources is helping to achieve good value for money. Workforce reform has been managed imaginatively to bring about a staffing structure better suited to the needs of the school. Leaders, at all levels, monitor the work of their areas and a system of departmental review has helped to focus planning for improvement. Nonetheless, a clear, shared understanding of the main elements of successful teaching and learning is yet to be refined. The governing body has a thorough knowledge of the school and fulfils its statutory and strategic responsibilities effectively. Links with other providers and the community are already good and should improve further if the school is successful in its bid for business and enterprise specialist status.

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Inspection judgements

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| <i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i> | School Overall | 16-19 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|

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 | 2 |
| How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being? | 2 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 | 2 |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements | 2 | 2 |
| Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection | Yes | Yes |

Achievement and standards

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---|---|
| How well do learners achieve? | 3 | 2 |
| The standards ¹ reached by learners | 3 | 3 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 3 | 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 | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 1 | |
| The behaviour of learners | 2 | |
| The attendance of learners | 3 | |
| How well learners enjoy their education | 3 | |
| 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 | 2 | |
| 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? | 3 | 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 to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|
| How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners? | 2 | 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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets | 2 | |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can | 2 | |
| 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

As you know, I visited your school recently with four other inspectors to see how well you were doing. We would like to thank you for your courtesy and help during the inspection. We saw a lot of lessons, talked to many students and teachers, and read what your parents said about the school. I am writing to you to tell you what we found out.

We judged that St Cuthbert's is a satisfactory school with a good sixth form. We were pleased to see that your standards of work and examination results have improved over the last three years, particularly in the sixth form. The leadership from Mr Wood and the senior staff is good. Your school is outstanding in the way that it gives you so many opportunities to understand the values of the Roman Catholic faith. It also teaches you well about becoming good citizens with good life skills.

There were a small number of aspects where we thought the school might do better still to help you to reach higher standards.

- Plan some of the lessons better with more interesting activities, so that everyone feels challenged and enjoys them more.
- Build on the improved results in mathematics and English so you can get even better examination grades in these subjects.

You must also play your part in making the school even better. Although attendance has improved, some of you still take days off when you shouldn't, and others don't always try hard enough to get to school and lessons on time. These things are very important if you are to make the most of the improving opportunities your school is giving you and in your future lives.

I wish you the very best for your future.