

St Hild's Church of England Voluntary Aided School

King Oswy Drive, West View, Hartlepool, County Durham, TS24 9PB

Inspection dates 4–5 February 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Achievement is not yet consistently good. Formerly too few students, including those who are disadvantaged, have achieved as well as they should.
- The most able students do not achieve as well as they should in English, science subjects and religious education.
- Not enough teaching is consistently good. The level of challenge and pace in learning are not consistently well matched to individual abilities, because expectations of what students of all abilities can achieve are insufficiently high.
- Reading, writing and communication skills are not taught effectively enough in all subjects to ensure students are confident readers and writers or clear and expressive communicators.
- Written feedback to students in books following marking does not always provide concise, well-defined steps for improvement and demands for corrections to eliminate misunderstandings.
- Opportunities are sometimes missed to encourage students to work things out for themselves and develop resilience and perseverance.

The school has the following strengths

- The drive and passion of the headteacher is successfully driving improvements in all that the school provides. Underperformance and underachievement are being systematically eradicated.
- Increasingly confident and skilled leadership in English and mathematics is playing a crucial role in driving up students' achievement and attainment.
- Increasing proportions of students are achieving at least five good GCSE grades, including English and mathematics.
- The most effective teaching motivates students very well.
- Behaviour around the school and in lessons is good. Students' improved attendance indicates their enjoyment of school life.
- A friendly and caring school atmosphere, which reflects the positive school ethos and values, ensures that students feel safe and valued.
- Governance is strong and governors demonstrate a secure grasp of the impact of all actions taken to strengthen school performance and improve both students' achievement and attainment.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 31 lessons, including nine paired observations and work scrutiny carried out with members of the senior leadership team. In addition, the inspectors made a number of short visits to lessons and undertook learning walks around the school in order to check the quality of what is provided for students.
- The inspectors spoke with students and had discussions with the headteacher, subject leaders, parents, staff, governors, a local authority officer and the school improvement partner.
- The inspectors also examined a range of documents including those related to safeguarding, the school's view of how well it is doing, the monitoring of staff performance, the school's improvement plan and records relating to student's progress and behaviour.
- The inspectors took account of 26 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) and 61 responses to the inspection questionnaire for staff.

Inspection team

Clive Petts, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Barbara Waugh	Additional Inspector
Paul Welford	Additional Inspector
Graeme Clarke	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a smaller than average sized secondary school.
- Almost all of the students are of White British backgrounds, with none who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled students and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- Currently, half the students are disadvantaged and therefore eligible for pupil premium funding. This is much higher than the national average. This funding is for those students who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- No students are currently entered early for a GCSE examination.
- There is no regular timetabled alternative provision away from the school site, apart from short-term placements for a very few students in local authority pupil referral units.
- The school provides a breakfast club each day for students.
- The school has experienced a large turnover in staff in the past 12 months.
- The acting headteacher was appointed in April 2014. There have been changes to the senior leadership, the governing body and middle leadership, since the previous inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to at least good to enable students to make faster progress and attain better by:
 - raising expectations further of what each student can do and achieve, regardless of their starting point
 - sharing the effective practice that exists in the school even more widely to promote higher levels of enthusiasm for learning and encourage students to show resilience and to solve problems for themselves
 - making more effective use of the good information the school has about students to eliminate attainment gaps between students and ensure that all achieve equally well
 - promote higher levels of reading, writing and communication skills across all subjects
 - provide well-defined written steps for improvement and provide time for misunderstandings to be corrected.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's vision and energy to ensure all students achieve at least well has been crucial in the good progress made in eradicating underperformance and underachievement. Students' progress rates are quickening and achievement rising, with any inconsistencies methodically tackled. Strengthened senior and middle leadership is adding much momentum in the drive to improve. A strong and experienced governing body contributes much to the school's strategic direction and continuous improvement.
- Both staff and students endorse the school's positive ethos which is bolstered well by good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This helps to promote respect for and tolerance of difference, successfully preparing students for the diverse society that is modern Britain.
- Robust systems are in place to check and evaluate school performance. Senior and middle leaders are well aware of what action is needed to further strengthen performance and sustain the gains made in improving the outcomes for students.
- Middle leaders are ever more effective in using their skills in checking and scrutinising students' performance. They are increasingly accurately pinpointing and addressing inconsistencies and weaknesses in students' performance to ensure all are able to make good progress and achieve well.
- Good leadership of teaching and learning ensures that training for staff is now relevant, well thought out and carefully targeted so that school and subject improvement priorities are addressed. Performance management is closely linked to the outcomes for students and makes certain there is no automatic pay progression. The support and training of new and recently qualified staff is good.
- The good curriculum is interesting and varied and progressively well matched to the abilities and needs of students. Increasingly, students' capabilities are developed consistently well. A wider range of thought-provoking activities are helping to stretch students' knowledge and deepen their understanding even more. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to practise their reading, writing and communication skills in all subjects across the curriculum.
- Students receive good careers advice and guidance which boosts their aspirations and helps them to make measured decisions about their next steps, whether in education, employment or training. Staff are working increasingly successfully to ensure all students have an equal chance of success and to eliminate any discrimination.
- Pupil premium funding is being used successfully to close the wide achievement gaps apparent at the previous inspection. Imaginative approaches, which create additional opportunities to learn, are having a positive impact on motivating disadvantaged students. This includes those boys who are sometimes easily disengaged from learning. This funding is also being effectively used to extend the range of experiences for those disadvantaged students who are most able. An example of this is their participation in a residential writing weekend.
- Safeguarding and child protection meet requirements. Procedures are well established and much good practice adopted in the day-to-day management, care and support of students. This includes checking the attendance, behaviour and progress of those students attending pupil referral unit provision.
- Ever-increasing parental confidence in the effectiveness of the school is evident as students' achievements and the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- The local authority has an accurate view of the school's performance. It challenges and supports in equal measure and senior leaders benefit a great deal from local authority expertise and experience.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The shrewdly led governing body is effective, supportive and at times very challenging. They are clearly focused upon ensuring that students' achievement is as high as it possibly can be. They maintain a careful check on the quality of teaching and learning and have an assured grasp of current quality. Governors check performance information rigorously and display a detailed and insightful grasp of strengths and areas for improvement. They ensure that performance management is effective and are uncompromising in holding staff to account for students' performance. This ensures that extra funding for the disadvantaged students has the intended impact on raising standards and skills.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good. This is the consequence of a positive school ethos which encourages care, honesty, respect and responsibility throughout all aspects of school life. In corridors, classrooms,

playgrounds and in the dining hall students are polite and thoughtful. At the start of the day, the breakfast club provides a welcoming and calm atmosphere. Students appreciate the attempts made to raise their ambitions and build their confidence. Through the effective promotion of students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, students learn the importance of British values, such as tolerance and respect for difference.

- In conversations, students report that any form of disruption is infrequent and, if it does occur, it is effectively managed and any issues resolved promptly by staff. Students are well informed about the different forms of bullying, including cyber bullying. They positively comment on the helpfulness of school staff listening to and resolving any concerns or worries they may have and providing any support that they may need. School records and parent feedback confirm that behaviour is typically good.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good. It provides very good support to make certain that students learn how to recognise and manage risk and danger. This includes when using new technology. Students are normally sensible, responsible and safety conscious, such as when in a practical environment using industrial sewing machines or making certain food hygiene precautions are followed.
- Good quality care and personalised provision is made for those potentially vulnerable students, those who are anxious and those who require help and support to improve their self-control and self-worth. Effective arrangements are made to keep safe the very few students who experience short-term placement in a local authority pupil referral unit.
- Attendance is improving steadily and is currently a little above the national average. Persistent absence has also been significantly reduced since the previous inspection. This is the result of determined leadership and robust systems for checking attendance. These improvements also reflect students' growing pride in their achievements and those of the school.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite measurable improvement, the impact of teaching over time is at times too variable. Although a more uniform pattern of faster progress and higher achievement is emerging in English and mathematics for students of all abilities and starting points, improvements in science are less assured and consistent.
- In classrooms, the climate for learning is typically positive because staff provide positive role models. Relationships with students are almost wholly positive. Nevertheless, not enough use is made of the available good quality information about students' progress to shape and adapt tasks and activities to meet their individual abilities, interests and needs. Consequently, opportunities are missed to capture students' interest and add progressively to their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- When students' rate of progress is variable and achievement requires improvement:
 - expectations of what each student is capable of achieving are not high enough
 - planned activities are not well enough matched to students' abilities to systematically build upon their learning at a good pace and encourage them to persevere with solving problems
 - questioning does not always probe, test out and add to students' understanding thoroughly enough
 - opportunities are missed for students to practise reading, writing and oral communication skills.
- When students' progress exceeds expected rates and achievement is rising steadily:
 - staff are clear about what each student can do and achieve and employ thought-provoking methods to constantly add to their skills, such as in speech and language
 - planned tasks take account of the individual abilities and needs of each student
 - penetrating questions constantly check and test students' understanding to ensure any misunderstandings are eliminated
 - helpful and constructive marking recognises what each student has completed well, how exactly the work can be improved and is rigorously checked so that students do not repeat mistakes in future work.
- In tasks when expectations and demands are high and progress quicker, interesting and imaginative use is made of problem solving challenges to enthuse students' thinking. For example, a group of younger students were busy and engrossed preparing the ingredients for their own version of a traditional recipe, with a firm emphasis on ensuring healthier ingredients were used.
- Typically, the marking of students' work is positive and helpful. Good use of praise and encouragement leaves the student in no doubt about what has been completed well. However, students are not always required to eradicate misconceptions or mistakes and teachers' guidance for improvement is too variable

in quality and at times insufficiently challenging.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Senior leaders' sharp focus upon improving the quality of teaching and learning is leading to an accelerating trend of progress and constantly improving attainment. However, these improvements have yet to be seen to be sustained over time. In the 2014 examinations at the end of Year 11, not enough students achieved as well as they could, including in English, mathematics and science.
- Students enter the school overall with below average attainment. Students' aspirations are sometimes low. In 2014, the proportion of students attaining five or more GCSE A* to C grades, including English and mathematics, rose appreciably to just below the national average. Attainment at grade C in English, mathematics and science was broadly in line with national figures. Although the proportions of students achieving the highest grades exceeded national averages in mathematics, the proportions in other subjects, including English and science, were below average overall.
- As a consequence of improving teaching, more students in the current Year 11 are on course to achieve at least a grade C in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science. Nevertheless, although achievement is rising in most subjects and inconsistencies more systematically tackled, it remains too variable.
- The most able students are responding well to the increasingly stimulating and thought-provoking work. Their rates of progress are quickening and achievement rising, despite opportunities being occasionally missed to stretch their knowledge and deepen their understanding even more.
- Students with disabilities or with special educational needs make broadly similar progress to their classmates. Although current progress still varies overall, it is accelerating as interventions and support is progressively more accurately focused on students' precise individual needs.
- Despite the attainment gaps between the disadvantaged students and others in the school narrowing significantly since the previous inspection, gaps have yet to be fully eliminated. In English at the end of Year 11 in 2014, disadvantaged students were over a half a grade behind non-disadvantaged students nationally, with a similar gap with other students in the school. In mathematics, gaps are wider despite much improved teaching. Disadvantaged students attained just over one grade lower than others, both nationally and within school.
- Current progress information, endorsed by work scrutiny and observation evidence, confirms that attainment gaps in English are on course to be close to being eliminated, compared with their disadvantaged peers nationally and with those non-disadvantaged students in the school. In mathematics, gaps are predicted to be a half a grade. This is the result of more effective subject leadership, increased use of thought-provoking and interesting activities and more accurate targeting of both intervention and enrichment activities. An example of this is the recent 'Likely Lads' initiative for boys, this provides attention-grabbing activities such as students meeting with a holocaust victim who spent time in Auschwitz. These activities all add to students' enthusiasm for learning.
- Year 7 catch-up funding is having a positive impact on nurturing basic skills, such as encouraging a love and enjoyment of reading. However, opportunities are missed to improve reading, writing and communication skills at a much faster rate by practising these skills in all subjects across the curriculum. This includes for those attending in-school intervention and support programmes and the local authority pupil referral unit provision.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	133293
Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	442282

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	699
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elizabeth Hawkrigde
Headteacher	Penny Barker
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2013
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